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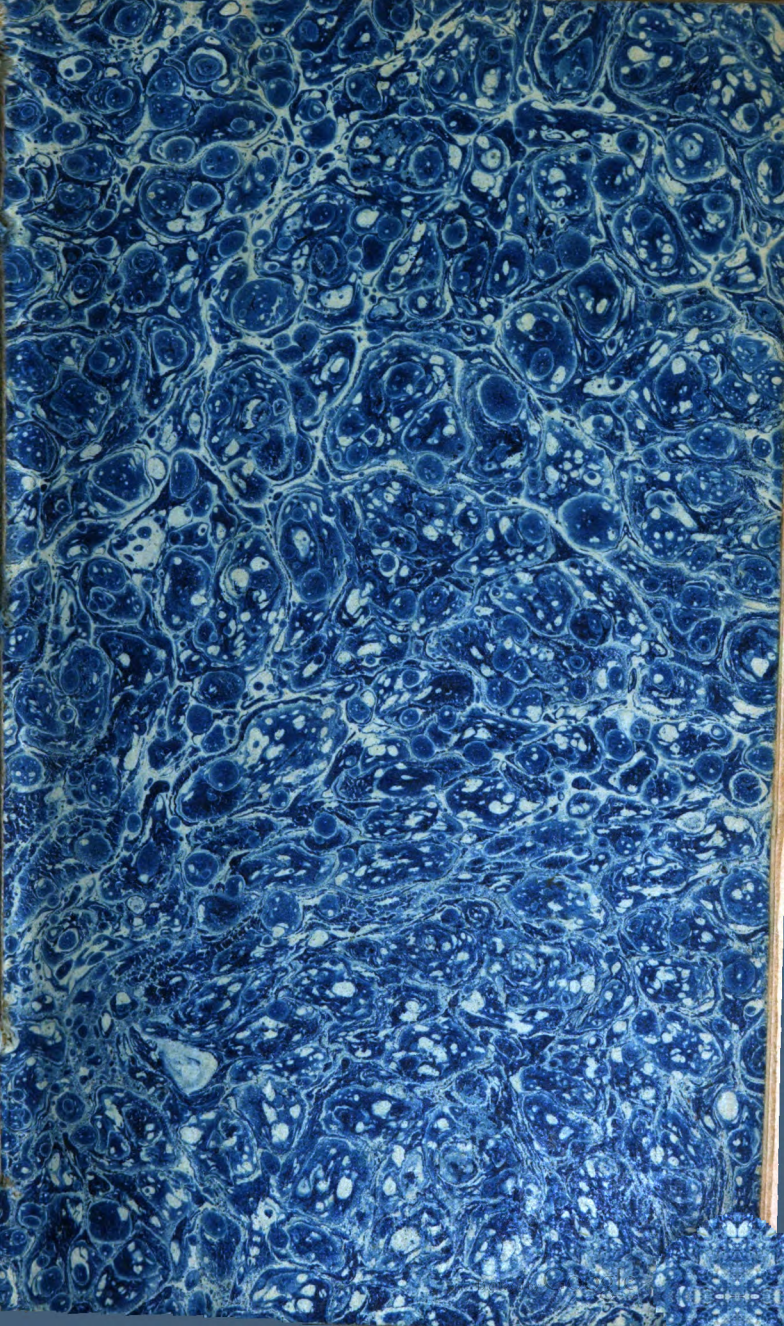
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CONSIDERATIONS

UPON

~~DEPOT~~

CHRISTIAN TRUTHS AND CHRISTIAN
DUTIES,

DIGESTED INTO

MEDITATIONS

FOR

EVERY DAY IN THE YEAR.

By the Ven. and Rt. Rev.

DR. CHALLONER, BP. OF DEBRA, V. A.

—————

10. 10. 10. 10. 10. 10. 10. 10. 10. 10.

SO CHANTILLY VOL. I.

FROM JANUARY 1, TO JUNE 30.

PHIL.

TW.

“Blessed is the man—whose will is in the law of the Lord; and he shall meditate on his law by day and night.

“And he shall be like a tree, which is planted near the running waters, which shall bring forth its fruit in due season.

“And his leaf shall not fall off, and all whatsoever he shall do, shall prosper.”

Psalm i. 1, 2, 3.

London :

PRINTED AND PUBLISHED BY KEATING, BROWN, AND KEATING,
No. 33, Duke Street, Grosvenor-Square.

1815.

437

THE
P R E F A C E.

DEAR READER,

I Here present thee with a set of Meditations for every day in the year, collected from the word of God, and the writings of the saints and servants of God. The subjects are digested in such a manner as to take in the whole Christian doctrine, with all the mysteries and solemnities celebrated by the Church throughout the year, and all the practical lessons of the Gospel. The great truths of the Christian Religion are here briefly proposed, in their own plain native colours: upon every subject there are three considerations, which may serve to entertain the devout Christian for half an hour, or longer, according to the time he allows himself for the exercise of daily meditation: and every meditation is concluded with pious resolutions, which may determine the soul to decline with all her strength for the time to come, from all evil, and to dedicate herself in good earnest to the love and service of her Maker, by a serious application of all her powers to good.

As to the preparation, that ought always to be premised; to avoid needless repetitions, I have not marked it down at the beginning of each meditation, but must here put thee in mind, once for all, that thou must ever begin this exercise by the faith and remembrance of the presence of God, and by humbly

imploping his light, grace, and assistance. Thou must also observe, that these considerations are not designed to be a matter of barren study, or speculation of the brain, but to be the seeds of pious affections in the heart ; which affections are looked upon by spiritual writers as the principal part of mental prayer ; as tending directly to bring the soul to her God, and to unite her to him by divine love. I have not set down, upon each subject, all the various affections, that might be drawn from every consideration ; as well because this would have been an endless work, and liable to frequent repetitions, as because these affections are usually taught by a better master, *viz.* the Spirit of God, to all such as diligently frequent his school, which he holds, in the interior of those souls that seriously exercise themselves in mental prayer.

HOWEVER, as it may be of some help to many, especially to beginners, I shall here point out the different kinds of affections which may be excited in the soul, according to the different subjects of her meditations, and the degrees of her advancement in a spiritual life. Such are, 1. Acts of a lively *faith* of the divine truths, set before the soul in the considerations ; and a bowing down of all the powers of the soul to adore the Sovereign Truth, that is thus pleased to reveal himself to little ones. 2. Acts of *fear* of the judgments of God ; of his wrath enkindled against impenitent sinners ; and of all the dreadful consequences of sin, and the punishments inflicted on it by divine justice, both in this world, and in the world to come. 3. Acts of *hope*, and confidence in the power, mercy, and goodness of God, represented in the meditation ; in the fidelity of his divine promises, made in favour of penitent sinners ; and in the inexhaustible treasures of merit and grace, purchased for us all by the labours, sweat, and blood of the Son of God. 4. Acts of the *love* of God, from the consideration of the goodness

of God in himself, of all his divine attributes, beauty and perfections; of his eternal love for us, and of all his benefits to us; and of the passion and death of his Son, for the love of us. 5. Acts of *shame* and *confusion* for our manifold sins against his infinite goodness; and for our base ingratitude, by which we have returned so much evil for so much good. 6. Acts of *repentance* and contrition for our sins; and of an humble accusation of them all at the feet of Christ; of a horror and hatred for them; and even a hatred of ourselves, for having been so base and wicked; with earnest supplications for mercy for what is past, and an offering of ourselves to a penitential life for the time to come. 7. Acts of *adoration* of the Divine Majesty; of *praise* and *thanksgiving* to him for all his benefits; of *invitation* of all the angels and saints, and of all his works, to glorify him; and of an *oblation* of our whole being, and of all that we have, to his glory. 8. Acts of *joy* in him, and of *congratulation* with him, that he is, what he is; of *zeal* for the greater glory of his name, for the advancement of his kingdom, and the executing of his will; of *desire* that all the world may be converted to him; and that all may know him, love him, and serve him. 9. Acts of *humility*, and contempt of ourselves; of embracing the cross, and of *resignation* to God's blessed will in all things; and of a total *dedication* and consecration of ourselves to be the servants of his divine love. 10. Acts of *desire* to *imitate* the virtues of our dear Redeemer, of his blessed Mother, and of all the saints, to attend to his heavenly lessons; to imprint them deeply in our hearts, and to sigh continually after him. 11. Acts of *compassion* for our Lord in his sufferings, with a great sense of what he has endured for us, and of all the outrages that are daily offered to him by wilful sinners. 12. Acts of a general *flight*, and abhorrence of all evil; and resolutions to embrace and follow all Christian virtues. Lastly, fervent petitions.

and prayers for the divine grace and assistance in all things.

THESE affections may also be exercised in the way of *colloquies* with our Lord, or with his saints, according to the exigence of the subject ; sometimes treating with him, as with a parent ; other times, as with a friend, or a spouse ; other times, as with our physician, representing to him all the maladies of our soul ; at other times, casting ourselves at his feet, like Magdalen, making a general confession of all our sins to him as to our high priest, and the true Pastor of our souls, &c. Ever representing him as near us, or rather as within us, and in the very center of our being ; and treating with him, as we would do if we saw him visibly present with us : and ever concluding our addresses to him with an oblation of our whole selves to him, to execute all his wills.

As to the necessity of this holy exercise of meditation, and the great advantages of the daily practice of it, I shall refer thee to what thou shalt find below, under the heads of *consideration* and *mental prayer* ; and I shall only add here, that a diligence in this exercise, is the great means to bring all good to the soul, and to conduct her safe to her Sovereign Good. The devil, who very well knows that such souls as apply themselves seriously to mental prayer, will be none of his, makes all possible efforts to divert Christians from this application by a thousand impostures ; and to frighten them with phantoms of imaginary difficulties : but this very opposition of his ought to convince us of the great importance of this exercise, and to make us more eager to pursue it, in spite of all his lies and deceits. He pretends, the practice of mental prayer is not for all, but only for such as live in convents or colleges ; that it requires wit and learning, and that the exercise of it is very difficult, &c. But all this is nothing but a delusion ; it is all imposition and lies. Mental

prayer, by way of meditation, is very easy even to the meanest capacities; it requires nothing but a good will, and a sincere desire of conversing with God, by thinking of him, and loving him. In effect, the great business of mental prayer is *thinking* and *loving*: and who is there that can even live without *thinking* and *loving*? But then, in mental prayer, the *thinking* and *loving* is not confined to such narrow limits, or mean objects, as the thoughts and affections of worldlings are, which lie always grovelling upon the earth; but it has an immense field opened for its entertainment, of great and everlasting truths, and such as are both highly moving, and of infinite importance to us all; and of great and eternal goods, together with the way to make them all our own.

As to the difficulty objected to mental prayer, from the importunity of distractions, and the dryness and indevotion that many find therein: it must be allowed, that in order to make any progress in this exercise, the Christian must do his part, in removing the occasions of these distractions; as well by maintaining a purity of conscience, as by retrenching all inordinate affections to creatures (for where the treasure is, there the heart and thought will be, and by restraining the mind, at other times, from idle and impertinent amusements, and from that continual dissipation of thought, in which too many Christians pass their days. But then, for our comfort, where we endeavour to follow these rules, the involuntary distractions, or dryness, which we find in prayer, will not be imputed to us, nor hinder our prayer from being acceptable to God; and though less pleasant, highly advantageous to ourselves. And what matter is it, whether we please ourselves or no, provided we please our God and do his will? This we may assure ourselves of, that if we continue faithful in attending, as it were, daily upon him, by this exercise of mental prayer, in

spite of all this dryness, and opposition of the devil, and of our own weakness and corruption, we shall not fail of coming, sooner or later, to taste of the excellent fruits that ever grow upon this tree of life.

I shall add no more by way of Preface, but only beg of thee, resolutely to undertake, and constantly to persevere, in this heavenly exercise of mental prayer, in spite of the world, the flesh, and the devil. What thou art seeking after is a treasure of infinite value: if it costs thee some pains in digging for it, it will abundantly recompense all thy labour. This exercise is the true Christian *philosophy*, consisting in the search and love of *true wisdom*; even that wisdom, which is so much extolled by the Spirit of God in holy writ, and which comes down from God, and carries us up to God: This is *the Science of the Saints*.

ERRATA.

PAGE LINE

- 12, 31, *for practice read practise.*
 22, 19, — their — the.
 63, 17, — Havoe — Havock.
 65, 1, — *ibid.* — *ibid.*
 139, 23, *dele to.*
 184, 30, *for lent read silent.*
 186, 8, — *sufferedst — sufferest.*
 260, 31, — *practice — practise.*
 353, last, — I — If.
 378, 26, *after forgiven add them.*
Ibid. 27, — *retained dele them.*

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CONSIDERATIONS

UPON

CHRISTIAN TRUTHS AND CHRISTIAN DUTIES,
OR

MEDITATIONS for every Day in the Year.

On New-Year's-Day.

Jan. 1. **C**ONSIDER first, that on this day we keep the octave of the birth of Christ, together with the festivity of his circumcision; when being yet but eight days old, he began to shed his sacred blood, in obedience to his Father's will; subjecting himself to that most painful, and most humbling ceremony, and bearing therein the resemblance of a criminal, as if he, like the rest, had stood in need of the circumcising knife for the expiation of sin. Christians learn here from your infant Saviour, the lessons he desires to teach you in his circumcision: his unparalleled humility, his perfect obedience and conformity to his Father's will, his patience in suffering, and his ardent love and charity for us. He came to discharge the immense debt we owed by our sins to his Father's justice, by shedding the last drop of his blood in expiation for them; and behold he has here given us an earnest of this payment, by submitting himself this day to the knife of circumcision.

Consider 2dly, and set before your eyes this divine infant, this innocent lamb of God, this beloved of your souls, beautiful beyond the children of men, all imbrued in his own most sacred blood; and suffering in that tender age the cruel smart of a most sensible wound. O how sensible indeed to him! O how sensible to the loving heart of his most blessed Virgin Mother! See with what affection she embraces him! See with what anguish of heart she be-

wails his sufferings! See with what tender compassion she strives to afford him all the comfort she is able! Learn of her the like affections of love and compassion for your suffering Lord. O my soul, embrace with her thy infant Saviour, bleeding for thee. *A bloody spouse art thou to me*, said Sephora to Moses, *Exodus* iv. 25. when to deliver him from the hand of the Angel that threatened him with death, she touched his feet with the blood of her child, whom she had just then circumcised. O how truly is our dear Redeemer a *sponsus sanguinum*, a *bloody spouse* to our souls, for whom he gives now this first fruits, and for whom he will one day give all his blood, to rescue us from the hand of the destroying angel! O blessed be his divine charity for ever!

Consider 3dly, that it is the duty of all Christians to imitate our Lord's circumcision, by a spiritual circumcising of the heart; which God so often calls for in the scriptures, and always preferred before the carnal circumcision. This spiritual circumcision requires of us a cutting off, or retrenching, all disorderly affections to the world and its pomps; to the mammon of iniquity, and to the flesh and its lusts; and a serious application of our souls to a daily mortification of our passions and corrupt inclinations: my soul, let us heartily embrace, and daily put in practice, this circumcision of the heart.

Conclude to make a return of thy heart to thy infant Saviour, who began on this day to shed his blood for thee: but see it be a heart purified by a spiritual circumcision, from all such affections as are disagreeable to him.

On beginning a new Life with the new Year.

Jan. 2. **C**ONSIDER first, how many years of your life are now past and gone: how long it is since you first came to the knowledge of good and evil: and in what manner you have spent all this precious time, given you for no other, end

but that you might employ it in the love and service of your God, and in securing the salvation of your immortal souls. Alas! have any of these past years been spent in such a manner as to answer this great end? Is not that one and only business for which you came into this world still to be begun? Have not all these years, which one after another have flowed away into the gulph of eternity, been utterly lost to your souls? It is well if they have not: considering how soon the greatest part of Christians, after their coming to the use of reason, fall from the grace of their baptism; how quickly they give themselves up to follow the bent of their corrupt inclination and by purifications; and in what a forgetfulness of for us; to the end ~~through~~ ^{through} their days. Ah! my soul, blood, he might cleanse ~~us~~ ^{it} be, if, during all these *an acceptable people, (a chosen* instead of storing up *priesthood, a holy nation,* 1 Peter, *you* hast been only *pursuer of all good works.* See *Christ* *against the day of* of men we ought to be, in consequence *at the* Son of God has done for us, in coming down from heaven for us. O let us never more degenerate by leading lives unworthy of him! Let us never more return to our former slavery.

Consider 3dly, that being purchased by the Son of God with so great a price, we are to consider ourselves henceforward as his property: and therefore we must not pretend to dispose of ourselves, any otherwise than according to his will and pleasure. This ought to be our *rule* in all we do; this we ought to consult in all our deliberations; this holy will of him that has bought us with his own blood, should be in every thing a law to us; so as ever to renounce all that we know to be displeasing to him; and ever to pursue, with all our strength, what we know to be agreeable to him. *You are not your own; you are bought with a great price,* says the Apostle, 1 Cor. vi. 19, 20. *Glorify, and bear God in your body.*

Conclude to take in practice for the rule of your life, this holy will of your Redeemer, according to

Consider 3dly, that the mercy of God has borne with you for so many years past; and notwithstanding all the provocations of your repeated crimes, and perpetual ingratitude, has brought you now to the beginning of this new year, out of a sincere desire, that now at least you might begin a new life, and such a life as might secure to your souls that true life which never ends. You have been, alas! like the barren *fig-tree planted in his vineyard*, which hitherto has brought forth nothing but leaves: but see, he is willing to try you once more, in hopes of your doing better for the future, and to manure you a little while longer with his word, his grace, his sacraments. But, O take care to do no more, by refusing him the thorough amendment of life, the terrible sentence, for the same, and cast into the

Conclude to be
from

and might cleanse to himself a people acceptable, a pursuer of good works. O how many great lessons are here contained in a few words! Let us reflect on them one after another.

Consider, therefore, 2dly, the end for which our God and Saviour came down amongst us, by the mystery of his Incarnation; enlightened us by his gospel and by his life; and at length offered himself in sacrifice for us, by his death upon the cross. *He gave himself for us*, saith the apostle, *that he might redeem us from all iniquity*: by setting us at liberty from being slaves to Satan, sin, and hell: by breaking asunder all the chains of our vices and passions: and by purchasing all mercy, grace, and salvation for us; to the end that, by the virtue of his precious blood, *he might cleanse us for himself*, and make us *an acceptable people, (a chosen generation, a kingly priesthood, a holy nation,* 1 Peter, ii. 9.) *a zealous pursuer of all good works.* See Christians what kind of men we ought to be, in consequence of what the Son of God has done for us, in coming down from heaven for us. O let us never more degenerate by leading lives unworthy of him! Let us never more return to our former slavery.

Consider 3dly, that being purchased by the Son of God with so great a price, we are to consider ourselves henceforward as his property: and therefore we must not pretend to dispose of ourselves, any otherwise than according to his will and pleasure. This ought to be our *rule* in all we do; this we ought to consult in all our deliberations; this holy will of him that has bought us with his own blood, should be in every thing a law to us; so as ever to renounce all that we know to be displeasing to him; and ever to pursue, with all our strength, what we know to be agreeable to him. *You are not your own; you are bought with a great price*, says the Apostle, 1 Cor. vi. 19, 20. *Glorify, and bear God in your body.*

Conclude to take in practice for the rule of your life, this holy will of your Redeemer, according to

the whole extent of the Apostle's exposition and declaration of the Christian's rule, *Titus*, ii. 11, &c. and you will be religious men indeed, of that excellent order which Jesus Christ came from heaven to institute; and you will be with him for ever.

On what we are to renounce by the Christian's Rule.

Jan. 4. **C**ONSIDER first, that in consequence of our redemption through Jesus Christ, we are bound by the tenor of our rule above rehearsed, to deny, that is to renounce, all *ungodliness; and worldly desires*, and to be *clean from all iniquity*: we are to turn away from all evil; but more especially from the evils here named. The first of which is *ungodliness*; which is usually the first crime we commit, and the source of all the rest. For by *ungodliness* we understand, either the giving away from God what belongs to him, or the refusing him the service and love which we owe him. Now here the sinner usually begins his revolt. He is indispensably obliged to dedicate himself to God from his first coming to the use of reason, instead of which, like the apostate angels, he turns himself away from him, he refuses him his heart, which he so justly claims, and gives it away to empty toys and lying follies. This is *ungodliness*; this is a kind of idolatry, in preferring the creature before the Creator; this is the source of innumerable evils; this is the very bane of the world. O let us renounce it, and detest it!

Consider 2dly, what those baits are which Satan usually employs to draw us away from God; for no man ever chooses to serve the devil for his own sake, or for any love he has for him: but the tempter sets before us the deceitful appearances of some worldly honour, profit, or pleasure; and with these he allures deluded mortals to his service: these are the gilded pills with which he poisons the soul: these are his treacherous baits which hide the hook, with which he draws millions into hell. Therefore the

Christian's rule requires that, together with *ungodliness*, he should also *deny* all *worldly desires*; that is, all affections to those worldly toys, and cheating vanities, as the most effectual means of disarming Satan, and hindering him from having any hold at all of us. For when we despise all that he can offer, and even fly and abhor his choicest allurements, he stands confounded, and can do no more.

Consider 3dly, that these *worldly lusts and desires*, which the Christian must renounce, are, in particular, those of which the beloved disciple writes, 1 John, ii. 15, 16. *Love not the world, nor the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the charity of the Father (the love of God) is not in him; for all that is in the world, is the concupiscence of the flesh, and the concupiscence of the eyes, and the pride of life.* It is on account of this *triple concupiscence*, which reigns in all places, that *the whole world*, as the same Apostle tells us (chap. v. 19), is *seated in wickedness*: so that if we desire to belong to Christ in good earnest, and to profess ourselves religious under his rule, we must declare a perpetual war against this triple concupiscence, and its abettors, *viz.* the world, and our corrupt nature: and then we may despise all the devils in hell. Yes, Christians, renounce but these three capital enemies of your souls, *viz.* the love of sensual pleasures, the love of gratifying the covetous eye with worldly toys, and the love of worldly honour and windy pride; and you shall be *clean from all iniquity*.

Conclude to be ever zealous observers of your rule, by *denying ungodliness, and worldly desires*: and turn your hearts to seek your happiness in other kinds of honours, riches, and pleasures; which the world cannot give, and which may stay with you for ever.

On the Lives we are to lead by the Christian's Rules.

Jan. 5. **C**ONSIDER first, that by our rule above rehearsed, we are not only to decline

from all evil, in consequence of our God and Saviour's coming amongst us, but we are also to do good: we are not only to *deny ungodliness; and worldly desires*; but also to *live soberly, and justly, and godly in this world*: that we may walk worthy of him who has *given himself for us*, not only that *he might redeem us from all iniquity*; but also that *he might cleanse us for himself*, and make us *an acceptable people, a pursuer of good works*. The Christian's duty, by his rule of life, has three branches; one of them relates to the regulating of himself; another regards his neighbours; but the third, and chiefest of all, relates to his God. All these we comply with, if we *live soberly, and justly, and godly*: because by living *soberly*, we keep ourselves in perfect order: by living *justly*, we behave ourselves to our neighbours in all things, as we ought; and by living *godly*, we dedicate our whole lives to God.

Consider 2dly, the great extent of these three branches of the Christian's duty; and how much this *sobriety*, this *justice*, and this *godliness* requires of us. Christian *sobriety* does not only exclude intemperance in eating and drinking, but also all other excesses and disorders that may any ways carry us out of the bounds of strict regularity: so that to be truly sober, we must restrain pride by humility, anger by meekness, lust by purity, and all the irregular motions of our passions and disorderly inclinations, by such a general temperance and moderation, as may maintain the whole man in a due decorum, both as to soul and body. And this Christian *sobriety* keeps us, as to ourselves, in perfect order, harmony, and peace. Christian *justice* regulates our whole conduct as to our neighbours, by that golden rule of *doing as we would be done by*: and, in consequence of this, excludes every thought, every judgment, or censure, every word or discourse, every action or dealing, that may any ways tend to his prejudice or disadvantage, and by this means, as

much as lies in us, we maintain due order, harmony, and peace with all our neighbours. And lastly, true *godliness* makes us seek God in all things, and above all things; and consecrates all our powers and faculties to his love and service; by the means of recollection, meditation, and continual prayer; and thus we maintain a perpetual peace with God. So that the complying with these three branches of our duty, makes us truly wise, and truly perfect, and establishes the peace of God in our souls.

Consider 3dly, that according to the words of the Apostle in the place above quoted, whilst we labour to comply with the excellent rule of Christ our Lord by *living soberly, justly, and godly in this world*; we must not confine our views to the narrow limits of this short life here below; but we must be ever *looking* forward towards the great object of the Christian's hope, *viz.* the blessed and glorious coming of our God and Saviour Jesus Christ, when he shall come to accomplish the great work he hath begun in us, and to take us home with him, both in soul and body, to our true country; and there make us his eternal kingdom. O how happy are those souls that are always aspiring after this coming of their Lord; and bewailing in the meantime the long continuance of their banishment here, and their great distance from him, in this foreign land!

Conclude to begin at least now, with this new year, to enter upon the true paths of life, by a general *sobriety, justice, and godliness*; and to strive to advance daily, by large steps, in this happy way, which leads to that life which never ends.

On the Epiphany.

Jan. 6. **C**ONSIDER first, that this day is kept by the church of God, with great solemnity, as one of the principal festivals of the year; and is called the *Epiphany*, that is to say, the *apparition* or *manifestation* of our Lord: because on this day he was first made known to the Gentiles, *viz.* to the

wise men of the East; who were conducted to him by the apparition of an extraordinary star, and inspired to pay their early homage and worship to him. O how just it is that we should all celebrate with a grateful devotion this day of our first calling to the knowledge and faith of Christ, this Christmas day of the Gentiles! O, my soul, how great is the benefit of thy *vocation* to the true Christian faith! what would all other favours, or advantages either of nature, or of grace, have availed thee, if this had been wanting? How miserable must thou have been, both for time and eternity, if, like millions of others, thou hadst been left to *sit in darkness, and in the shadow of death*! O bless him then both now and for ever, who, without any desert on thy part, has brought thee to his admirable light!

Consider 2dly, the wonderful ways of divine Providence; as well in preparing before-hand both the Jews and Gentiles, to expect about that time the coming of the great Messiah; as in giving an early notice of his birth both to the Jews and the Gentiles: to the Jews by an Angel sent to the shepherds; to the Gentiles by the star that appeared to the wise men of the East. But, alas! how few, either of the one or the other, duly corresponded with this great call! And is not this the case of millions to this day, who, though many ways called and invited by, and to that *light which enlighteneth every man that cometh into this world*, John i. choose rather to remain in the darkness of infidelity, error, or vice; than to follow the conduct of that star, that would bring them to the true light? O how clearly shall we see one day that there was nothing wanting on the part of divine Providence to bring us all to himself, but that we have been generally so unhappy, as to be wanting in our correspondence with his lights and calls!

Consider 3dly, that this star, which gave notice of the birth of our Saviour, was seen by all the nations of the East: but that the generality contented

themselves with gazing upon it, without taking any pains to seek him, whom that star preached unto them: whilst the wise men, following this divine call, set out without delay in quest of this new-born king: in consequence of which, these were happily brought to Christ, and to his admirable light; whilst those others remained in darkness, and died in their infidelity. See, my soul, the difference between a ready compliance with the inspirations and graces of God, and the neglect of these heavenly calls: a difference, which, as it produces here the distinction of the saint and the sinner; so will terminate hereafter in a happy eternity for such as follow God and his calls, and a miserable eternity for such as neglect them. Ah, sinners, dread the consequences of neglecting the calls of heaven! God will not be mocked.

Conclude to be ever attentive to all those gracious lights and inspirations, by which you are invited to leave the ways of iniquity, and to come and follow Christ. Alas! how many of these stars have you hitherto neglected. Arise now at least, and set out by the guidance of this divine light, that you may make the best of your way home, from those husks of swine to your Father's house. It is not yet too late.

On the Wise Men's Journey to Bethlehem.

Jan. 7. **C**ONSIDER first, that the wise men were no sooner informed, by the apparition of this extraordinary star, of the birth of the great king that was to rule the world; but they set out to seek him in Judea, where they understood, by an ancient tradition, and by the prophecy of Balaam, *Numb. xxiv. 17.* that he, that was denoted by that star should be born: and as it was natural for them to expect to hear news of him in Jerusalem, the capital city of Judea, they went thither to enquire after him: *Where is he, say they, Matt. ii. 2. that is born king of the Jews? For we have seen his*

star in the east, and are come to adore him. But as *his kingdom was not of this world*, but was to be established upon other kinds of foundations than any mortal empire, in the immortal souls of his people, and that upon the ruins of worldly pride, and of all the pomps of Satan; he chose for his birth the humble stable of Bethlehem, before any of the stately palaces of Jerusalem, as being more agreeable to his kingdom, the kingdom of humility and truth. O how happy are those souls whose eyes are always open to this heavenly truth, and shut to worldly vanity and lies! How happy they, who, by conforming in practice to these maxims of this great king, become themselves his kingdom; even that kingdom in which he shall reign for ever.

Consider 2dly, how King Herod was troubled, at hearing of the birth of this new king, and so was all Jerusalem with him: in which they were a figure of all such souls as are so wedded to this cheating world, and its lusts, as to be more afraid of parting with them, than of losing an eternal kingdom; and therefore they are troubled and disturbed when they are summoned by the messengers of heaven to arise, and leave these toys, to go and seek after Christ: and they even strive to stifle the heavenly infant, that would gladly be born in their souls, by smothering those lights and graces that offer to conduct them to him. O how much more happy were the dispositions of the wise men, who were willing at any rate to find Christ; and who gladly sought and embraced the directions of those that by their office were qualified to point him out to them? But, alas! how miserable were those priests and scribes, who, whilst they directed the wise men to our Saviour, took no pains to seek him themselves. See, my soul, this never be thy case.

Consider 3dly, how the wise men, in their way from Jerusalem to Bethlehem, were again favoured with the sight of the star, which both conducted them to Bethlehem, and pointed out to them the

place where our Saviour was. This heavenly light filled their hearts with *exceeding great joy*; and going in, they found him whom their souls desired, and they paid their homage to him. O how precious, how lovely, how desirable is that light, that conducts the soul to Christ! O what joy, what delight it is to the soul to see herself draw near to her God, her sovereign good! But then this heavenly manna is not usually given, but to them that fight, and that conquer all the labours, difficulties, and oppositions, that they meet with in the way to Christ, and who, like the wise men, are quite in earnest in seeking him. Happy they that follow this great example! Happy they that taste, and see, how sweet the Lord is to them that seek, and find him!

Conclude to imitate the wise men: first, in their ready compliance with the divine call: 2dly, in their diligence in inquiring after Christ: and 3dly, in their perseverance; and then you may confidently expect, like them, to find your Lord, and to rejoice in him.

On the Faith and Offerings of the Wise Men.

Jan. 8. **C**ONSIDER first, the strong and lively faith of the wise men: they set out with expectation of finding an infant king, attended with that state and pomp which was suitable with the dignity of one that was born to be monarch of the universe: and behold, instead of this, they meet with nothing but poverty and humility; a babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, and laid in a manger; attended only with a poor maid, and an humble tradesman; an ox and an ass. But their faith by this time was more fully instructed in the qualities of him, whom they had been seeking for with so much labour: and therefore they were not shocked with those mean appearances, nor looked upon them with a worldly eye; but under this poor and humble equipage, believed and adored their king, their God,

and their Saviour. O how happy are those souls whose faith takes no scandal either at the crib, or at the cross of Christ; but rather knits them so much the more closely to him, by how much the more he has debased himself for the love of them!

Consider 2dly, how the wise men, having found our Lord, immediately fell down prostrate before him, and worshipped him; professing by this humble and submissive posture of the body, the profound reverence and adoration of their souls. Do we imitate them by the like humility, reverence, and adoration, when we appear before the same Lord in prayer? After this homage, they opened their stores; and made him their offerings, of gold, frankincense, and myrrh; to signify by the quality of these their gifts, their faith in him to whom they gave them: they presented him with their gold, as a tribute due to him, as their king; they offered him their frankincense (which was used in their divine worship), as to their God; and they gave him their myrrh (which was used in the burial of the dead), as to a mortal man, who came to redeem all mankind by his death. O let us, by their example, daily offer him our best homages, in all these qualities, as our king, as our God, and as our Redeemer!

Consider 3dly, that the wise men having found Christ, were admonished from heaven not to return any more to Herod, and so went back another way to their own country, to teach us, that after finding Christ, we must return no more to his, and our enemies, Satan and sin; but must make the best of our way to our true country, by a quite different road from that by which we came away from it. Our true country is Paradise: we came away from this our country by pride, by disobedience, by the love of these visible things, and by gratifying our sensual appetite with the forbidden fruit. We must take quite another road, if we hope to return thither again: it must be by penitential tears, by humility,

by despising these visible things, by restraining our sensual appetite, by wholesome mortifications of the flesh, and other self-denials, and by a constant obedience, that we are to find the way back to our true home.

Conclude to quit the broad road of gratifying thy passions and sensual pleasures, and to pass over to the narrow way of penance and self-denial, and thou shalt be safely brought back to thy true country, and to thy Father's house.

Of the Offerings we are to make, by the Example of the Wise Men.

Jan. 9. **C**ONSIDER first, that the *gold, frankincense, and myrrh*, offered by the wise men to our new-born Saviour, mystically denote other offerings, which we also ought daily to make to him. In the first place, we must offer him the tribute of our *gold*, as to our true king; that is, we must daily present him with our souls, stamped with his own image, and burnished with divine love. This is the gold, this is the tribute our Sovereign expects from us. When the Jews asked him concerning their giving tribute to Cæsar, he called for their coin, in which they had the image of Cæsar; and inferred from thence, that they were to *render to Cæsar the things that were Cæsar's*, (Matt. xxii.) that is, to give him what was stamped with his image. Our souls are stamped with God's own image, to this very end, that we should give them in tribute to him, by perfect love: *render then to God the things that are God's*; by daily offering your whole souls to him, by fervent acts of love; and you shall have given him your gold.

Consider 2dly, that we must also offer our *frankincense* to our Saviour, as to our God. *Incense* in scripture is considered as an emblem of *prayer*, and expresses the worship we pay to our Lord, by sending up to him the odoriferous vapours of our devotion, as from the censer of a heart burning with the love of God. Prayer then is the *frankincense* which

we must, in imitation of the wise men, present to our Saviour, as to our God. This we must daily offer to him, at the *hours of incense*, as a morning and evening sacrifice, in the temple of God, which is, within our souls: with this, we ought also to endeavour to perfume, in some measure, all our other daily actions and employments, in order to make them agreeable to him.

Consider 3dly, that with these offerings of the *gold of divine love*, and of the *frankincense of fervent prayer*, we must also join that of the *myrrh of self-denial and mortification*, which our Lord no less expects and requires at our hands than the other two; since he has so expressly declared, that except we *deny ourselves and hate ourselves* in this world, we cannot be his disciples. *Myrrh* has a bitter taste, but it is a wholesome bitter; and it has an excellent property to keep bodies from corruption. This is an emblem of the *mortification* of our passions and sensual inclinations, which is somewhat bitter indeed, and disagreeable to the taste of our nature, but is sovereignly wholesome, and necessary to keep the soul from the corruption of sin. So that this offering of *myrrh*, like the other two, should be the daily exercise of a Christian, and should as it were season all his thoughts, words, and deeds, to restrain them from evil.

Conclude, O my soul, not to let a day pass without frequently offering to thy Lord the gold of love and charity, the frankincense of prayer, and the myrrh of self-denial; and he will certainly accept of both thy offerings and thyself; and in exchange he will give thee himself.

On the Gospel of the Sunday within the Octave of the EPIPHANY.

Jan. 10. **C**ONSIDER first, how Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, went every year up to Jerusalem, to the temple of God, upon the solemn festivals; notwithstanding their poverty, and their living

at the distance of three days journey from Jerusalem : and there they employed the weeks appointed for the feasts in assisting at the public worship, praises, and sacrifices which were offered to God in the temple at those times. Christians, learn from this great example, the diligence with which you ought to assist at the public worship of God upon festivals. Learn not to suffer every trifling difficulty to hinder your attendance in God's temple on those days, when neither the length, nor the charges, either of the journey, or of the stay they were to make in Jerusalem, could keep this holy family from a constant observance of those times dedicated to God. But O, who can worthily apprehend the dispositions of soul with which they entered upon these journeys ; their recollection on the road, their heavenly conversation in Jerusalem ; their profound adoration, their inflamed love, their fervent prayer and devotion in the temple ! let us strive to imitate them.

Consider 2dly, how, when Jesus was twelve years old, and they had gone up, according to their custom, to keep the solemn feast of the Pasch in Jerusalem, after the days of the solemnity were fulfilled, when they returned, our Saviour withdrew himself from them, and staid behind them in the city. They innocently thinking him to be in the company, went one day's journey homeward without him, and then not finding him, were struck with unspeakable grief and concern for their loss : the more, because they apprehended, lest by some fault of theirs, they might have driven him away from them. Ah ! what anguish must it be to a soul, that is sensible of the treasure she possesses, when she has Jesus with her, to find that he has withdrawn himself from her, and that she has lost her treasure. But how much more must this blessed couple have resented the loss of their Jesus ; whose love for him was much greater than can be expressed or imagined ? For in proportion to their love, their sorrow

also must have been beyond expression great. Learn from hence, my soul, what value thou oughtest to set upon the happiness of having Jesus with thee, and how much thou oughtest to regret the loss of him.

Consider 3dly, that although the Blessed Virgin and St. Joseph had lost their Jesus as to his sensible presence, yet they had not lost him, as to the presence of his grace and love; they had him still very near to them, because they had him in their hearts. A lesson for Christians of good-will not to be discouraged, nor to give themselves up to excessive anguish, if sometimes they experience the like subtractions of the sensible presence of our Lord, by a dryness in their devotions, and a spiritual desolation. Let them but take care to keep their heart and will with him; and they may be assured he is not far from them. He has often dealt thus with the greatest saints, and to their advantage too; to keep them more humble, and distrustful of themselves; and to teach them not to seek their own satisfaction in the milk of spiritual consolations, but to be content to feed their souls with the more solid diet of conformity to the will of God, and to the cross of Christ.

Conclude to take care not to drive away Jesus by wilful sin; and be assured that nothing else can ever separate him from thee.

On seeking Jesus, when he has been lost by Sin.

Jan. 11. **C**ONSIDER first, how great an evil it is to lose Jesus by wilful sin. Ah! it is a far greater loss, than if we should lose the whole world beside; for in losing him, we lose our all. This loss is the greatest misery that can befall any soul on this side of eternity: it wants nothing but eternity to make it hell. And yet how common is this loss? How often is Jesus lost in this manner, even in our most solemn festivals, by the abuse of these holy times? And how is it possible that a

Christian soul should admit of any manner of comfort, joy, or pleasure, under so great a loss? What then must they do that have reason to apprehend they have thus lost their Jesus, and that he is now no longer theirs, and they no longer his? They must learn from the Blessed Virgin and St. Joseph, how they are to seek him, and find him again: for though this blessed couple had not lost him in that wretched way, yet the manner in which they sought him, may be an instruction to all others, to teach them by what means Jesus may be found again when he is lost.

Consider therefore, 2dly, that the Blessed Virgin and St. Joseph were no sooner sensible that they had lost Jesus, but they began to seek him without the least delay; and they gave themselves no rest till they had found him again: to teach us, that there ought to be no manner of delay in seeking him, as soon as ever we perceive we have lost him, and how much we ought to resent so dismal a loss. They made no stay in the place where they were, but hastened back to Jerusalem, to find him there; not enduring to remain for ever so short a time at a distance from him: to teach us to spare no pains either night or day, in seeking him, and in using all means in our power to come at him. They sought him *sorrowing*; that is, with their souls full of grief and anguish, through the sense they had of the loss of their *beloved*: to teach us, that the true way to find Jesus when lost, must be by a *sorrow* influenced with love; that is, by a contrite and humble heart. They sought him with perseverance, and did not give over their search till they had effectually found him: to teach us not to desist, upon meeting with difficulties and oppositions in our search after Jesus, but to go on with diligence, till we recover his gracious company.

Consider 3dly, that Jesus was *not found* by the Blessed Virgin and St. Joseph, *amongst their kindred and acquaintance*. Alas! he is too often lost in the

company and conversation of our worldly friends, but is very seldom to be found there. The common conversation of the world is at the best but empty, worldly, and distracting; and it is out of fashion to speak or think of Jesus in the company of worldlings. Therefore the soul that would effectually find him, must withdraw as much as may be from worldly company, and must enter into a kind of spiritual retreat: she must make the best of her way by spiritual reading, meditation, and prayer, to the temple of God in Jerusalem; or rather, she must make a temple for her Jesus within her own self, and seek him there by inward recollection. It is the surest place to find him in. O sinners, return to your own hearts, and you will quickly find your God. When you went astray from him, you went astray also from your own hearts, and from your inward house; you forgot at the same time both God and yourselves. Return home to your interior, and you shall recover them both again.

Conclude, if at any time you have reason to apprehend that you have lost Jesus, to withdraw immediately from the crowd, to seek him in his temple in your own interior, and to give yourselves no rest till you have found him there. There he will hear you, and there he will teach you.

On the Lessons our Lord Jesus gives us in his private Life.

Jan. 12. **C**ONSIDER first, those words spoken by our Lord Jesus to his parents, when they found him in the temple in the midst of the doctors, hearing them, and asking them questions, *Luke ii. Did you not know, said he, that I must be about my Father's business? He came down from heaven, not to do his own will, but the will of him that sent him, John iv. 38.* This was his daily food, during his mortal life. *My meat, said he, is to do the will of him that sent me, John iv. 34.* This then was the exercise of his private life; which he spent in obscurity and re-

tirement, under a poor carpenter's roof. He was all the while about the business of his Father. He was ever doing the will of his Father. All his thoughts and words, all his actions and omissions, were directed to his Father's glory. And this is the great lesson we are to learn from him in his private life. We all of us, like him, came into this world for nothing else but to do the will of God: we all of us ought to be ever about the business of our heavenly Father: all our thoughts, words, actions, and omissions, ought to be directed to him. O let us study well this great lesson, which the Son of God employed so many years in teaching!

Consider 2dly, how *he went down with Joseph and Mary to Nazareth, and was subject to them*, Luke ii. 51. O stand astonished, my soul, to see the Lord and Maker of heaven and earth submitting himself to his creatures, and obedient to them! O see how he serves them even in the meanest offices; how he works with his reputed father at his mechanic trade. But with what modesty and silence, with what recollection and application of his soul to his heavenly Father, by continual adoration, thanksgiving, adoration, and love, and by continual prayer and intercession for us? Christians, learn from this great example to be ever humble, meek, and obedient. Learn to sanctify your ordinary employments, and even your common actions, by recollection and mental prayer. Learn, that even the highest perfection may be found in the exercise of the lowest and meanest offices; if in these the soul do but take care to keep close to her God, and to embrace him by love.

Consider 3dly, what is written of our Lord with relation to this private part of his life. That *Jesus increased in wisdom, and age, and grace with God and men*, Luke ii. 52. Our Lord, who from the first moment of his conception, was full of all heavenly wisdom and divine grace, was pleased, in proportion to his advancing in age, to shew forth, every

day more than other, in his words and actions, the admirable treasures of wisdom and grace that were hidden in his soul: to teach us to make a continual progress in the way of God, and to advance every day by large steps from virtue to virtue, till we come *unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the age of the fulness of Christ*, Eph. iv. 13. Christians, do we seriously apply ourselves to learn this excellent lesson? What progress have we hitherto made, after so many years pretending to walk after Jesus Christ in the way of virtue? Have we not, for the most part, rather gone backward than forward? O let us now at least begin to be in earnest!

Conclude to learn of our Saviour all those lessons which he desires to teach us in his private life; particularly these three: 1. To be ever about the business of our Father. 2. To be ever submissive and obedient to his vicegerents; and 3. To be ever making the best of our way to him.

On our Saviour's being baptized by St. John the Baptist.

Jan. 13. **C**ONSIDER first, how St. John the Baptist, being sent as a fore-runner of our Lord, to prepare the people for him, by preaching to them penance, and a thorough conversion from their sins; when a multitude of publicans and other sinners resorted to him, and were baptized by him in the Jordan, confessing their sins, and receiving from him the rules of a new life: our Lord Jesus also came among them, as if he had been one of their number, and stood in need of that baptism of penance for the remission of sins, and desired to be baptized by him. Admire the humility of this *Lamb of God*, who came to *take away the sins of the world*, and yet here associates himself with sinners, and is willing to pass for one of them. The Baptist was astonished at it, and refused to baptize him, saying: *I ought to be baptized by thee, and comest thou to me?* But Jesus insisted upon his

doing it : *for so it becometh us*, said he, *to fulfil all justice*, (Matt. iii. 14, 15.) that is, to exercise, and to give examples of all virtues ; amongst which, *humility* is the foundation which sustains all the rest. O give us thy grace, dear Lord, that we also *may fulfil all justice*, by the imitation of thy humility.

Consider 2dly, how our Lord Jesus, having thus humbled himself, *to fulfil all justice*, was presently *exalted* by his heavenly Father ; when *being baptized and praying, heaven was opened : and the Holy Ghost descended in a bodily shape, as a dove upon him, and a voice came from heaven : Thou art my beloved Son, in thee I am well pleased*, Luke iii. 21, 22. Learn from hence, my soul, that humility opens heaven, and conducts us to God, and to all good. But see, also, how upon this occasion of the baptism of Christ, the chief mysteries of religion are displayed : see how the whole Blessed Trinity manifests itself ; the Father by his voice from heaven ; the Son in his human nature, assumed for us ; and the Holy Ghost by descending in the shape of a dove. See how the mission, and the whole gospel of Jesus Christ, is here solemnly authorized, with a formal declaration of the dignity of his person, and of his unction and consecration by the Spirit of God : see how the Son of God, descending into the waters, sanctifies them, in order to those great effects of *regeneration* and *renovation* of the soul, in the laver of baptism : see how he buries, as it were, the *old* Adam here, under the waters, and brings him forth a *new* man ; opening heaven in his favour, and imparting to him both his holy Spirit, and the title and dignity of Son of God. O let us venerate these heavenly mysteries ! let us here embrace our humble Saviour, the source of all our good.

Consider 3dly, how our Lord began the functions of his mission, and the preaching of his Gospel, from this time of his being baptized ; and his being here solemnly recommended to the world ; not only by the repeated testimonies of St. John Baptist, but by the voice of his heavenly Father, and by the vi-

sible descent of the Holy Ghost. But first, for our instruction, he was pleased, by way of preparation, to withdraw himself from the conversation of men, into a lonesome wilderness, and there to employ forty days in fasting and prayer; at the end of which time he suffered three different assaults of temptation from Satan; and after overcoming this wicked enemy, was visited and served by Angels. Christians, let us learn from this great example, in all our spiritual undertakings, to seek first the assistance and blessing of heaven, by retirement, fasting, and prayer: let us learn, that these same are also the best arms against all the temptations of the enemy: that we are not to expect, how much soever we are retired from the world, to live without temptations, since Christ himself was tempted, and tempted in the desert; but that we must, by his example, fight and overcome; and that this is the way to heavenly comforts here, and to an immortal crown hereafter.

Conclude to keep as close as thou canst to the Lord Jesus, in every step he takes, and to have thy eye always upon him; that thou mayest copy out his virtues in thy life.

On the sacred Name of Jesus.

*For the first Sunday after the Octave of the
EPIPHANY.*

Jan. 14. **C**ONSIDER first, these words of the Apostle, *Philip. ii.* spoken of the eternal Son of God, incarnate for us: *He humbled himself, becoming obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath exalted him, and hath given him a name which is above every name; that in the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those that are in heaven, on earth, and under the earth; and that every tongue should confess, that the Lord Jesus Christ is in the glory of God the Father.* Christians, let us then venerate this sacred name, and all the mysteries and heavenly truths it contains; which are so many, and so great, that no tongue can sufficiently express them, nor heart conceive

them. The name of Jesus came from heaven: it signifies *a Saviour*; but such *a Saviour* as should deliver his people from their sins; reconcile lost man to God; purchase for him mercy, grace, and salvation, and of a slave of Satan, and a child of hell, make him a Son of God, and heir of heaven. O what has not our Lord Jesus done, what has he not suffered that he might be such a *Jesus* to us! none but he could ever fulfil the import of this heavenly name: none but a *God-man*, an *Emmanuel*, that is, a God with us, could be a Jesus to save his people from their sins, and be to them a never-failing source of all true good; even to that degree, as to make them in a manner partners in his divinity.

Consider 2dly, that the name of Jesus is a name of virtue and of *power*: in this name the churches of God were planted throughout the earth. In this name the Apostles wrought all kind of miracles, and even raised the dead to life. By this name millions of martyrs have overcome death in all its shapes. This name has peopled the deserts with holy solitaries; and every nation of the Christian world, in every age, with innumerable saints, who, *looking upon Jesus the author and finisher of their faith*, have, through his name, overcome the world, the flesh, and the devil, and are now set down with Jesus in his throne, according to the promise he has made to them that conquer in his name, *Rev. iii. 21*. To this sacred name so many mighty monarchs have yielded themselves captives; submitting both themselves and their kingdoms to this great conqueror; and oftentimes leaving even their crown and sceptre for the love of this divine name. O kingdom of Jesus, kingdom of mercy and grace, when wilt thou extend thy conquests over all the universe; and bring all kings and people, all nations and all hearts, to bow down, to embrace, and to give all praise and glory to this adorable name?

Consider 3dly, that the name of *Jesus* carries with it an unspeakable majesty, tempered with humility,

meekness, sweetness, and love ; inasmuch as it expresses to us *a God made man*, even a poor, meek, and humble man, out of a pure love for us. It shews forth to us all the divine attributes, stooping, as I may say, to the work of our redemption, in order to raise us up from the dunghill, and to bring us to a heavenly kingdom. *Jesus* is a name of mercy, a name of comfort, a name of grace and salvation: it promises pardon and forgiveness to all penitent sinners; it preaches to them deliverance from their slavery, and from their bonds; the discharge of all their debts; the healing of all their maladies; and the rescuing them from all their enemies, and the wrath to come. It supports the Christian pilgrim under all his labour; it comforts him in all his afflictions; it is his refuge in all dangers; it sets before him the source of all his good; it encourages him to pray with an assurance that there is nothing but what he may obtain if he prays in the name of his Saviour. It puts to flight all the powers of hell; they cannot bear that sacred name: it conquers the world and the flesh: in fine, it opens heaven to all its true lovers and followers. O, sacred name, mayest thou be always in our hearts, and in our mouths! It was so with the blessed apostle St. Paul: O may we, like him, find all things in Jesus!

Conclude ever to venerate the divine name of *Jesus*, as presenting to your souls the principal object of the Christian's *faith*; the strongest grounds of his *hope*; and the chiefest motive, and most powerful attractive, to engage his *love*; viz. a God incarnate, and crucified for us. Thus you may exercise, as often as you hear this sacred name, all the three theological virtues of faith, hope, and love of God.

On our Lord's changing Water into Wine, at the Marriage-feast of Cana, St. John. ii.

Jan. 15. **C**ONSIDER first, these words of the Gospel, *There was a marriage in Cana of Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there. And*

Jesus also was invited, and his disciples. Happy marriage which our Lord was pleased to honour with his presence, and with his first miracle! He himself was the author and first institutor of marriage; and therefore was pleased to give it a sanction, and a blessing, by assisting at it. He came to marry, as it were, by his incarnation, our human nature with his divine person: he came to marry himself to his church, and by imparting to it a spiritual grace, to raise Christian matrimony to the dignity of a sacrament; which should be a sacred and mysterious sign of his perpetual union with his church: he came to espouse our souls to himself; and therefore was pleased to favour this marriage (in which the contracting parties were, in all appearance, allied both in blood and virtue, with his blessed mother) with his first miracle. O how happy were they in inviting Jesus and Mary to their wedding! O how unhappy are they, who, when they marry, *shut out God from themselves, and from their mind, to give themselves to their lust*, Tob. vi. 17. *Over these the devil hath power*: because they invite him, rather than Jesus, to their wedding. And is not this the true cause why so many marriages are unhappy, for want of the blessing of Jesus?

Consider 2dly, how, in the midst of the marriage-feast, wine was wanting, to teach us, how deceitful are all the pleasures of the world, and how often they fail us, when we expect the most from them. O, it is Jesus alone can furnish our immortal souls with the true *wine that cheareth the heart of man*. It is his love alone can present us with pure delights, which bring with them joy and peace, and a certain fore-taste of heaven. He often changes, in favour of his friends, even the waters of *the torrent in the way*, into delicious wine, by the consolations he gives them in their labours and afflictions, and the spiritual blessings of his grace, for the advancing their souls in divine love, and bringing them nearer to himself, the source of all sweetness: whilst the

world, the flesh, and the devil, do but delude us, by flattering ourselves at first with a false sweetness: which quickly comes to an end, and leaves nothing behind it but bitterness, discontent, and remorse.

Consider 3dly, that this miraculous change, made by our Lord, of water into wine (which was his first miracle), was a prelude to another more miraculous change, which he made at his last supper, and will continue to make, by his ministers, even to the end of the world, of bread and wine into his own body and blood. With this wonderful miracle, he daily honours the wedding feast of his own espousals with our souls, in order to communicate himself to his spouses, and to unite them to himself. And by the means of this communication of himself to us, he operates another no less wonderful change in us, by which he changes us in a manner into himself. The corporeal food we take is by the means of our natural heat daily changed into our flesh and blood; but this spiritual food, like the fire, which changes all things into itself, is not changed into our substance, but changes and transforms our souls as it were into his own nature, to make them one with this bread of life; here by grace, hereafter by glory; O miraculous change! O blessed conversion!

Conclude to be ever thankful for all the wonders which the Son of God has wrought, and continues daily to work for thee. But particularly join with the church at this time of the Epiphany, in celebrating with love and gratitude, those three miracles, which were the forerunners of, and introductions to all thy good: thy *vocation* to the true faith, thy being regenerated in Christ by *baptism*; and admitted to his heavenly feast in the blessed Eucharist in which thou art incorporated with him. O who can ever sufficiently love him, and praise him, for these great wonders of his love to us!

On the Necessity of Consideration.

Jan. 16. **C**ONSIDER first, and take a view of the whole Christian world, and see how much Satan and sin every where reign. See how many thousands in every nation, of all degrees and conditions, pass their lives in mortal sin, with little or no concern, or apprehension, either of death, judgment, or hell: see how they wallow in the mire of carnal pleasures: see how they indulge their passions, and prefer every empty toy, mere bubbles, before their immortal souls, before their God, and a happy eternity: see how numbers of them, even live without God, and in a total forgetfulness of him: then see how hell opens wide its jaws, and daily swallows down thousands of them; cut off alas in the midst of their sins, when they least expected it, and hurried away in a moment from their short-lived, empty, and deceitful satisfactions, to dreadful and everlasting torments. And whence proceeds all this dismal scene of evils, but from the want of consideration? *With desolation is all the earth made desolate, saith the prophet, because there is none that considereth in the heart.* Jerem. xii. 11.

Consider 2dly, the great truths which the Christian faith teaches. That there is a God of infinite majesty whose eye is always upon us: a God infinitely good, and infinitely just; and who hates wilful sin with an infinite hatred. A God who is our first beginning, and our last end, our Creator and Redeemer to whom we belong by all kind of titles; who made us for himself, and sent us hither upon no other errand, and for no other business, but to love and serve him in this world, and to be eternally happy with him in the next: that there is another life hereafter, in comparison with which the present is but a moment: that death will quickly separate us from all these visible things, and send us into another region, where all that worldlings have set their hearts on will appear as smোক: that there is a

judgment to come: and that there is a heaven, and a hell, &c. All these are articles of the Christian faith; and all most certainly true; and in themselves very moving. And do all Christians believe these truths? They must believe them, or they are no Christians. But how then is it possible they should live as the generality do? How is it possible that such as believe all these things should live on in sin, and walk in the broad road that leads to hell? O! it is for want of consideration. It is because they do not think.

Consider 3dly, that the great difference between the good and bad Christian is, that the one thinks well on the truths he believes, and by that means lets them sink deep into his soul, and take root there, so that they bring forth in him the fruits of all virtues: whereas the other does not think; and therefore is little or nothing affected with the truths of the gospel; they make no impression upon him; because his faith is asleep, or rather dead, for want of consideration. O what wonderful effects have we not seen produced in the world by consideration? How many, even of the greatest sinners, have been reclaimed by it; and drawn back from the very jaws of hell? How many has it sent out of the midst of Babylón to seek their God in solitude; and to consecrate their lives to him? O that men would but think, what a reformation should we see in the world! O, it is thinking, is the true way to heaven; and not thinking, the high road to hell!

Conclude to allow thyself daily some time to meditate upon some or other of the great truths that relate to God and eternity. It is one of the best means thou hast to secure thy soul. They that will not think of these things now, will infallibly think on them hereafter, when their thinking will only serve to increase their eternal misery.

On the Consideration of God.

Jan. 17. **C**ONSIDER first, that we cannot be saved without *the knowledge of God*, and such a knowledge as may effectually influence our lives, and command both our love and obedience. Now we can neither know God, nor love him as we ought, without the help of consideration. It is consideration that discovers to us his infinite beauty and perfection; and the many pressing motives we have to dedicate ourselves wholly to his love and service. It is consideration sets before our eyes his eternal love, and all his benefits to us, and convinces us that he is both infinitely charming and lovely in himself, and infinitely good to us. Without consideration, we know these things, as if we knew them not: we have eyes and see not. But when these truths are duly weighed and *considered* by the soul; it is then the light of the knowledge of God begins to dispel our darkness; and in our meditation the fire of his love breaks forth into flames, which sweetly carry up the soul towards their heavenly element, which is with God; and hinder her from ever forgetting him.

Consider 2dly, how large a field we have in God for our meditation, whether we consider him as he is in himself, and in his own divine attributes; or with relation to what he is to us, and the titles he has been pleased to assume in our regard. He is in himself *eternal*, that is, without beginning, without end, without change, self-existent, independent: he is being itself, he alone properly is; *I am who am*, says he, *Exod. iii.* all other things are just nothing at all; they have no being but from him, and in him: he is the being of all beings. He is *immense* and *incomprehensible*, and every way *infinite*: he fills heaven and earth: creating, preserving, moving, ruling, supporting all things. He is infinitely wise, infinitely powerful, infinitely good, infinitely just, infinitely merciful; he is beauty itself, truth itself,

and all perfection. See, my soul, what an immense field we have here for our consideration! It has no end. Here is more than enough to employ us for all eternity; in this vast ocean of the infinite perfections of the Deity, the blessed themselves can find no bottom. Here they are happily lost in the contemplation of him, who, though he discovers himself to them face to face, and fills their soul with heavenly pleasure, remains nevertheless *incomprehensible*, even to the highest angels, because he is every way *infinite*.

Consider 3dly, that there still remains an ample field for meditation, to help us to acquire the knowledge and love of God, in the manifold considerations of what God is in our regard, and how good he is to us. He is our sovereign good: he alone can satisfy our souls. He has loved us first: he is our ancient lover; he is our eternal lover: his thought and heart is always upon us: he is a disinterested lover: a most faithful and most constant lover; whose love never forsakes them that do not first forsake his love. He is our maker, and our redeemer; the best of fathers; the best of friends; the spouse of our souls. He ever desires to come and dwell with us, and in us; and to impart all his heavenly treasures to us; in a word, to give himself to us, and to take us to himself. And are not here sufficient motives to oblige us to love this great and good God; infinitely good in himself, and infinitely good to us? Is it possible that a generous heart, made through love and for love, should hold out against such pressing considerations as these, so far as to refuse a return of love? O, divine love, it is only because thou art thought of so little, that thou art so little known in this wretched world; and it is only because thou art so little known, that thou art so little loved. O it is consideration then is both the true way to know thee, and the true way to love thee!

Conclude ever to seek by daily considerations and to cherish in thy soul, this saving and savoury know-

ledge of God; as the source of divine love and of all thy good. And remember that a deluge of all evils will come pouring upon the soul, where this *knowledge of God* is wanting. *Osee, iv. 1, 2.*

On the Consideration of the Law of God.

Jan. 18. **C**ONSIDER first, that, in order to our salvation, we must also have a right knowledge of the holy law and commandments of God: we must know all the precepts and maxims of the gospel of Jesus Christ; and we must know them in such a manner as to be practically convinced of the beauty of this divine law, of the equity of these commandments, of the excellence of these heavenly precepts, of the truth of these gospel maxims; that so we may heartily embrace them, love them, and keep them. Now this infers a necessity of a serious and frequent meditation on God's holy law; without which we shall not even know as we ought the duties and obligations of a Christian life; much less shall we have a due esteem and love for these divine statutes and ordinances, which our great king has made to be for us the way to true life. *O! Blessed is the man whose will is in the law of the Lord: and who shall meditate on it day and night. And he shall be like a tree which is planted near the running waters, which shall bring forth its fruit in due season; and his leaf shall not fall off: and all whatsoever he shall do shall prosper, Ps. i.* O happy meditation which is the source of so much good! Unhappy they who seldom think of this divine law, and therefore neither love it, nor keep it.

Consider 2dly, that, even under the old testament, God required of his people that they should continually meditate on his divine commandments, *Deuter. vi. 6, &c. These words which I command thee this day shall be in thy heart: and thou shalt tell them to thy children, and thou shalt meditate upon them, sitting in thy house, and walking on thy journey, lying down in bed, and rising up. And thou shalt bind*

them as a sign on thy hand, and they shall be, and shall move, between thy eyes. And thou shalt write them in the entry, and on the doors of thy house.

Now, if under the old law (when so great perfection was not expected of the faithful as now), God was pleased to require this close application of the soul to the meditating on his divine precepts, how much more does he now expect it from us, under the new covenant of grace and love, in which he delivers his commandments to us, not graven on tables of stone, but on the tables of the heart; not to be laid up in the ark, or deposited in an earthly sanctuary, but to be laid up within us, in the true sanctuary of God in our souls? Christians, this is our glory, and our wisdom; this is our happiness above all other people, to have the divine law written in our hearts: to keep it there by love and affection, and to read it there by attention and meditation, lest otherwise we lose so great a treasure.

Consider 3dly, what were the sentiments of the royal prophet, with regard to the law and commandments of God, and the duty of meditating continually upon them. He has abundantly declared them in the 118th psalm (*alias* 119th), where there is scarce one verse, in which the beauty and excellence of the divine law, the love and observance of it, the great happiness of keeping it, and the many advantages of meditating upon it, are not strongly inculcated. For which reason the church, in her canonical hours of prayer, appoints this psalm for the daily devotion of her children, in order to inspire into them the like sentiments, with relation to the holy law and commandments of God, and to oblige them daily to meditate upon these divine ordinances. Christians, can any thing else be of so great importance to you as to study well the true way to a happy eternity? Can any other science deserve your attention in comparison with this? Is not your all here at stake? And what other way is there to secure to your souls a happy eternity, but

the knowing and keeping the law and commandments of God? It is this then calls for your study and attention by daily considerations and meditations.

Conclude to turn henceforwards your thoughts from vain and curious searches into things little or nothing to your purpose, to the daily considering on what God requires of you by his holy law, what your duty is to him, and what his will is in your regard. The studying this is our great business. O how little will all other sciences avail, if this be neglected?

On the Consideration of Ourselves.

Jan. 19. **C**ONSIDER first, that, besides the obligation we lie under of daily consideration, in order to know God, and our duty to him, there is another branch of necessary knowledge, which also calls for our serious attention and meditation: and this is the knowledge of ourselves. 'This is the highest and most profitable lesson,' says the devout *A Kempis*, 'truly to know, and to despise ourselves.' The knowledge of ourselves is the foundation of true humility, which is the virtue that teaches us to despise ourselves: and humility is the foundation of all other virtues; they have all a necessary dependance upon it. So that the knowledge of ourselves is, in effect, the foundation of all virtues. Now this knowledge of ourselves is not to be acquired without frequent and serious consideration. For to know ourselves right we must consider attentively our origin and extraction; what we have hitherto been; what we are now at present; and what we shall be by and by: and such considerations as these will open your eyes, and will convince us what poor wretches we are, and how little reason we have to be proud: and, on the contrary, how many urgent reasons we have to despise ourselves, and to be thoroughly humble.

Consider therefore, 2dly, your extraction, as to your body, out of dirt and corruption; as to your

soul, out of nothing; and that whatsoever you have, either as to body or soul, above mere nothing, is not of your own growth, but the property of your Maker. Reflect that you no sooner came into a being, but you were defiled with sin; and were children of wrath. That your whole life has hitherto been one continued course of sin and ingratitude. And ah! how often have you fallen into that worst of evils, that bottomless pit of *mortal sin*? And what a dreadful figure did you then make in the sight of God, and his holy Angels? What confusion, what horror, what an eternal damnation was then your due? And is not this still your case at this day? And what title have you then to any regard, either from God or man? What claim to any benefit, or service from any of God's creatures? Or what just complaint can you make, if all the world should abhor you, as a traitor to God, a slave to the devil, and a victim of hell; and all creatures should join together against you, to revenge upon you the cause of their Creator? Reflect also on the many miseries you daily lie under, the small light there is in you, for the discerning true good from that which is only so in appearance; the strength of your passions, and self-love; your perpetual repugnance to the taking true pains for acquiring real goods, and the violent bent of your inclinations to evil. And then consider how soon death will be with you, and send your bodies to the worms, and your souls to the bar of divine justice, under a dreadful uncertainty as to your eternal lot. And see if, in the consideration of these things, you will not find matter enough to cure your pride, and to bring you to a true sense of your manifold misery and corruption; that so you may learn entirely to distrust in yourselves; to be ever humble; and to place your whole confidence in God.

Consider 3dly, the other great advantages which the soul acquires by often entering into herself, by the means of serious consideration; and taking an

impartial view of the whole state of her own interior. Here she discovers her spiritual maladies (to which before she was a stranger), and she is enabled, by this discovery, to seek and to apply proper remedies to all her evils. Here she finds out the secret ambushes of her enemies, especially those more subtle ones of her pride and self-love, which are continually seeking to impose upon her, and deceive her. Here she learns to discern between the different motions of nature and grace, to watch over her own heart, to regulate its affections and inclinations, to guard against her passions, and to order her whole interior in such manner as to be agreeable to him who desires to make it his everlasting temple. O how happy it is for the soul thus to know herself! Ah, what will it avail a man to know all things else, if he be a stranger to himself!

Conclude to make the knowledge of thyself one of thy principal studies for the future. The Saints have always considered the knowledge of God, and the knowledge of themselves as the most necessary of all sciences. O study well, by the means of daily meditations, this science of the saints in both its parts. Daily pray with St. Augustine, *noverim te, noverim me*. Lord, give me grace to know thee: Lord, give me grace to know myself.

On our first Beginning.

Jan. 20. **C**ONSIDER first, my soul, that not very long ago thou hadst no being all, nor any share in the transactions of the world: thou wast not even so much as thought of by any creature upon earth. In this low abyss of nothing thou hadst been ingulfed from all eternity; and there of thyself thou must have remained to all eternity, infinitely beneath the condition even of the meanest insect, or the most inconsiderable of all God's creatures: so that whatsoever thou hast at present above this mere nothing, is no acquisition of thy own, nor any property of thine, but the pure gift of thy Maker. Down

then with all self-conceit and presumption: down with all vain-glory : acknowledge thy true original, thy original nothing: sit always down in the lowest place, even in the center of thy nothing : ascribe nothing to thyself, as of thy own growth, but thy manifold sins : give the whole glory of all the rest to thy Maker.

Consider 2dly, who it was that drew thee out of the deep abyss of nothing into this being, which thou now enjoyest : who gave thee this power of thinking, this conscious life, this will, this memory, this understanding ; who made for thee this soul and body ? No other but he that made heaven and earth ; even the eternal, immense, infinite Deity. And how came this great God to think of making thee ? What did he see in thee, that could move him to love thee, and to bestow this being upon thee ? O, it was nothing but his own infinite goodness ; for there could be nothing in thee worthy of his love : he stood in no need of thee : thou couldst do him no service. O ! embrace then, with all the powers of thy soul, this infinite goodness of thy God. Give thy whole being to him, who has given it all to thee. Dedicate thy whole self to his love and service, for time and eternity.

Consider 3dly, that God made thee after his own image and likeness, that he might engage thee the more to love him. This image and likeness is in thy soul, which is a spiritual being ; and in the spiritual powers of thy soul, thy free-will, which nothing controuls, and which can be satisfied with nothing less than God ; and thy understanding, which is capable of soaring above all things visible and invisible, and reaching to the contemplation of God himself. O let not then this noble spirit lie any longer groveling in the mire of the earth ! Let not this will, that was made to be a queen, be a slave to flesh and blood. Let not this understanding, this mind, this thought, that should contem-

plate heavenly truths, be bowed down to empty earthly toys.

Conclude to be ever mindful of thy own nothing : and that thou hast received all thou hast from the pure bounty of God. The sense and remembrance of this truth will teach thee, always to despise thyself, and to love thy Maker with all thy strength.

On our last End.

Jan. 21. **C**ONSIDER first, my soul, why thou camest hither? what is thy business in this mortal life? for what end has God made thee? upon what errand has he sent thee hither? This should have been the subject of thy meditation from thy first coming to the use of reason : and hast thou ever yet seriously thought on it? Thou canst not here plead ignorance : for one of the first things thou wast taught, was that thou wast made for God ; and that the business for which thou camest into the world, was to know him, love him, and serve him here, and so to come to enjoy him hereafter in a happy eternity. O how noble, how glorious, how blessed is this end for which thou wast made ! O how good is thy God, who has made thee for himself and for heaven ; and even from all eternity has designed this happiness for thee !

Consider 2dly, that, properly speaking, thou hast but one thing to do in this mortal life ; and that is no other than to answer this end, for which thou wast made, by dedicating thyself in good earnest to the love and service of thy Maker. This is that *one thing necessary*, Luke x. 42. If thou apply thyself seriously to this great business, all is well : if thou neglect this, all will be lost : whatever success thou mayest meet with in any thing else. *O what will it avail a man, to gain the whole world, if he lose his own soul, and with his soul lose his God, and a happy eternity?* O let all other business then be subordinate to this : let all that no ways conduces to this, be

despised as vain and unprofitable: let all that is opposite to this be avoided, rejected, and abhorred, as hurtful and pernicious. O how true it is, *vanity of vanities, and all is vanity*, besides the loving God, and serving him alone. *Kempis.*

Consider 3dly, the great blindness and misery of worldlings, who live in a continual neglect and forgetfulness of this their only business; whose pursuits are after mere vanities; who weary themselves, like children, in running after butterflies, in catching at bubbles and empty shadows; such as vain honours, false riches, and deceitful pleasures, that last but one moment; and for these they forfeit God and eternity. And has not this, O my soul, been hitherto thy own case? O be confounded at the thought of thy having been so strangely senseless, and so very wretched. Detest the errors of thy past life: and now at least resolve to mind thy true and only business, and to turn to thy God with all thy heart.

Conclude, since God is both thy first beginning and last end; since thou art made by him, and for him; and all thy powers, senses, and faculties, are designed to bring thee to him; to employ them all henceforward in serving and glorifying him: thus only shalt thou find true comfort here, and heaven hereafter.

On the Titles God has to our Service.

Jan. 22. **C**ONSIDER first, that we belong to God by all manner of titles, and therefore cannot without the most crying injustice alienate any part of our being from him, or refuse to employ our whole lives in his divine service: we are his by *creation*, because he made us, and made us for himself; and therefore has given us a Soul, capable of knowing, loving, and enjoying him; and not able to find any true rest or satisfaction but in him. Our whole being is from him: our whole soul and body, with all our powers, senses, and faculties, belong to him: all whatsoever we possess, interiorly or exte-

riorly, is all his. And as the fund is his, so the whole produce ought to be his. As we are absolutely and entirely his property, and all our time, and all our talents, are but lent us by him, so we are indispensably obliged to dedicate all our hours, all our thoughts, words, and actions to him. And have we ever rightly considered this obligation? We belong to God in like manner, by the title of *conservation*, by which he preserves and maintains every moment the being he has given us: otherwise we should presently return again to our ancient nothing. So that, as in every moment we have an obligation to him for our continuance in being what we are, so every moment we are obliged to be his.

Consider 2dly, that we belong also to God, and that in a very particular manner, by our *redemption*; by which the Son of God has purchased us for himself and for his Father with his own most precious blood. For we had sold ourselves to Satan: we were become his slaves: we had no longer any share in God, or title to him: we were rebels and traitors to him by sin; and as such, we stood condemned to death and to hell. But behold, the Son of God, out of pure love and compassion, comes down from heaven to redeem us; he pays himself the price of our ransom; a great price indeed, even the last drop of his most sacred blood; to deliver us from Satan, sin, and hell; and to reconcile us to his Father, and to purchase mercy, grace, and salvation for us. So that now, by virtue of this redemption, he claims us as his own property: and it would be a sacrilegious robbery, to pretend to alienate again from him these souls of ours, which he has purchased for himself with his own blood. It would be even, in the language of the apostle, *treading under foot the Son of God, and esteeming the blood of the covenant unclean, with which we were sanctified*, Heb. x. 29.

Consider 3dly, that we belong also to God, by solemn vows and covenants, and by the *dedication*, by which we were happily and holily, dedicated and

consecrated to him in our baptism and confirmation ; and sanctified to be his temples for ever. Now all those things, that are once solemnly consecrated to God ; and more especially such as are made the temples of the living God, must be always his : and it would be a most grievous sacrilege, to pervert them from his service to profane uses ; and therefore it would be highly criminal in us to pervert those souls of ours from the love and service of their God, to whom they have been thus solemnly dedicated, and to profane and defile them by wilful sin. We belong to him also in quality of our King, our Father, our Lord and Master, the great Sovereign of the whole universe, the Being of all beings, &c. and upon these, and many more titles, his divine Majesty challenges our love and service as his undoubted right : O let us never be so miserable as to refuse him what he so justly claims. Let us look upon it as our greatest happiness that we belong entirely to him.

Conclude to render faithfully to God, what upon so many titles belongs to him, by giving up your whole selves to him, and employing henceforward both your soul and body in executing all his will.

On the Happiness of serving God.

Jan. 23. **C**ONSIDER first, these words of the prophet (Isai. iii.) *Say to the just man : it is well :* and reflect on the many advantages which this short word *well* comprises and ensures to the just, both for time and eternity. Honours, riches, and pleasures, are the things on which the world sets the greatest value : but they are not to be found where the world seeks them, but only in the service of God. It is indeed a greater *honour* to be a *servant* of God, than to be the emperor of all the earth. What then must it be to be his friend and favourite ; to be his spouse, to be his child, to be his temple ? can any worldly honours be compared with these ? O how glorious a dignity it is, to be heir apparent to a

heavenly and eternal kingdom ! O how happy, in the mean time, during our mortal pilgrimage, to walk and converse with God ; to be as familiar as one pleases with this great King ; to have admittance into his closet whenever we will ; to have an assurance from him of a favourable audience, and of obtaining all our requests, &c. How truly honourable is it, to have one's name enrolled in the book of life ; one's character established, not in the mean village of this world (which nevertheless cannot help admiring and esteeming true virtue) but in the great city of God, the heavenly Jerusalem ? O my soul, let such honours as these be the only objects of thy ambition.

Consider 2dly, how rich the just man is : not always indeed in those worldly possessions, which every accident may take away, and which can never satisfy the heart : but in treasures infinitely more valuable, of virtue, grace, and merit, which all the money in the world is not sufficient to purchase, and which make the soul rich for eternity. But the servants of God have still a greater treasure than this, *viz.* God himself, whom the whole world cannot take from them, as long as they take care not to drive him away by wilful sin. *He is their protector, and their reward exceeding great,* Gen. xv. He is always with them : he is a tender father to them ; the eye of his special providence is ever upon them ; his angels encamp about them, to defend them, and deliver them from evil. In a word, God is all things to them that fear and love him : so that, even as to the goods of this world, he never forsakes those that do not first forsake him. O my soul, see thou seek no other treasure but him : he will make thee rich indeed : fear no loss but the losing of him : if thou hast him, nothing can make thee miserable : but without him nothing can make thee happy.

Consider 3dly, the solid *pleasures* that attend a virtuous life : such as the satisfaction, peace, and joy of a good conscience ; the sense that holy souls

have of God's goodness, and love for them ; the experience they have of his sweetness, in their recollection and prayer ; the consolations of the Holy Ghost, and the ravishing delights they often find in God, as a foretaste of the joys of heaven ; the comfortable prospect of a happy eternity, after their short mortal pilgrimage ; and above all, their love of God, and a blessed conformity to his will in all things, which sweetens even the greatest crosses. Such pleasures as these are far beyond all that worldlings can pretend to ; pleasures pure and spiritual, which have supported, and even given an inexpressible joy to the martyrs under the worst of their torments : which have sweetened all their labours and penitential austerities for other saints ; and made them think whole nights too short, when spent with God in prayer. O ! how great then is that error, how pernicious is that deceit, by which Satan persuades the children of this world, that there are no pleasures in a virtuous life ; whereas indeed there is no true pleasure in any thing else.

Conclude, since thy whole happiness, in time as well as eternity, depends entirely upon loving and serving God, to set out from this hour in quest of this happiness, by entering upon the beautiful path of virtue, which alone can bring thee to it.

On the Vanity of all those Things that keep Worldlings from the Service of God.

Jan. 24. **C**ONSIDER first, how truly *vain* all those things are which poor deluded worldlings prefer before their God: empty bubbles, mere toys and trifles, false appearances, deceitful baits, laid by the enemy to catch their souls ; gilded pills, that conceal a deadly poison ; deluding dreams, and airy phantoms, that will all vanish away in a moment, and leave both their hands and their hearts empty : and then, alas ! the scene will change, and their fool's paradise of an imaginary happiness, shall turn to real, dreadful, and everlasting evils. O ye chil-

dren of men, how long will you be in love with vanity? how long will you run after mere lies, and deceits? Reflect upon those that have gone before you; upon those that have enjoyed the most of what this world could afford of honours, riches, and pleasures, and tell me what judgment you think they make of them now. O they will certainly cry out with Solomon (*Eccles. ii. 11.*) that *in all these things they found nothing but vanity and vexation of spirit.* They will loudly condemn their own past folly and madness, in having set their hearts upon such toys, to the loss of God and their souls.

Consider 2dly, and take a nearer view of these worldly idols, these phantoms of honours, riches, and pleasures, and see with what toil they are acquired; with what care and fears they are possessed; how easily they are lost; how great evils they are exposed to; what a slavery they bring along with them; how short, and how inconstant they are; how false and deceitful; how often imbittered with gall; how mean, and unworthy the affections of a Christian; how far beneath the dignity of an immortal soul, made for nothing less than God; and how incapable of giving any solid content or satisfaction to a heart that can never rest but in its Maker. O how truly miserable then are all these children of Babylon, who are enslaved to things so base, so vile, so filthy! How wretched is that life that is all spent in this manner, in weaving cobwebs, in running after butterflies, in catching at shadows! in squandering away those precious hours, that were given to secure to the soul a happy eternity, in impertinent amusements, in idle, foolish, and often sinful conversation; in dressing out, or pampering a carcase that must quickly be the food of worms; in public houses, in hanging over a pack of cards, in reading love tales and romances, and such like empty fooleries. Surely such a life as this must be most irksome and tedious, void of all true content, joy, peace, or

comfort here, and of all prospect of happiness hereafter.

Consider 3dly, how this folly and misery of worldlings is described by the prophet *Isaias*, chap. lix. where he tells them that they put their trust in that which is a mere *nothing*; that *they speak vanities*; that is, that their whole discourse and conversation is empty, foolish, and nothing to the purpose; that they *conceive labour, and bring forth iniquity*: that they are sitting day and night upon the *eggs of asps* (most poisonous serpents) which if they *eat* will bring present death; and if they *hatch*, will turn out serpents and destroy them. That all their works are but spending their bowels in *weaving spiders webs*, which *can never cloath them*; *unprofitable works*, fit for nothing but to catch flies: that *their thoughts* and devices are all vain and *unprofitable*; and that their ways lead to destruction: that their *paths are crooked*; and that *there is no judgment in their steps*; and that *whosoever treadeth in them, knoweth no peace*. O see how pathetically the Holy Spirit has here described the pains and labours poor worldlings take in the pursuit of lying madneses, which bring all kind of evils and death to their souls, without any manner of real profit or pleasure; and learn thou to be more wise than to walk in their footsteps.

Conclude never to imitate this wretched choice of blind mortals, who turn away from God to follow after cheating vanities: but to despise from thy heart all those childish toys, and to turn to the charming paths of wisdom, virtue, and truth.

On the Conversion of St. Paul.

Jan. 25. **C**ONSIDER first, and admire the wonders of the grace of God, in the conversion of St. Paul, suddenly changed from a fiery zealot for the Jews religion, and a bloody persecutor of the Church of Christ, to be a fervent Christian, a zealous preacher of the gospel, a vessel of election

to carry the name of Christ to nations and kings, a doctor of the Gentiles, an apostle of Jesus Christ, and a most eminent saint. Learn from hence the greatness of God's mercy, and the power of his grace : learn never to despair of the conversion of any one, how remote soever he may seem from the faith or grace of God : who could be more remote than the convert of this day. Assure thyself that the hand of God is not shortened, and that his power, mercy, and goodness, is as great now as ever : add therefore never cease to pray to God for the conversion of infidels and sinners. It is likely the conversion of St. Paul is in a great measure owing to the prayers of St. Stephen. Join with the church on this day in glorifying God, and returning him thanks through Jesus Christ, for the wonders of his mercy, and grace in St. Paul, and the many thousands he has brought, through his preaching, to the ways of truth and life.

Consider 2dly, that the conversion of St. Paul is, by the church, set before our eyes this day as a model of a perfect conversion, from which sinners may learn, 1st, how readily they ought to correspond with the calls and graces of God inviting them home : 2. how they ought to yield themselves up entirely to him : and 3. what their lives ought afterwards to be, in consequence of that distinguishing mercy which God has shewn them in their conversion. Paul was no sooner called by the voice of Jesus Christ, but he presently obeyed the call, and yielded himself up to be his for ever. His prayer he then made was short in words, but very expressive of the perfect disposition of his soul in this regard, and of the sacrifice he desired to make of himself, without the least reserve, to the holy will of him that called him. *Lord, said he, what wilt thou have me to do?* As much as to say : *My heart is ready, O God, my heart is ready* : here I am prostrate at thy feet, desirous only to know and to do thy will ; send me where thou pleasest, ordain concerning me what thou pleasest ; I desire to be thine

in life and death : I desire to have no exceptions at all to thy blessed will. See also how, being sent into the city, where he was to learn of Ananias the will of God, and to receive from him the sacrament of regeneration, for the washing away his sins ; he there continues for three whole days, neither eating, nor drinking, but wholly employed in prayer. O this was shewing himself to be a convert indeed ; this was being quite in earnest in preparing himself for his baptism ; this was laying a solid foundation for a new life. O that all penitents would set this great example before their eyes, when they pretend to make their peace with God ; and would, like Paul, prepare themselves, by fervent and long continued prayer, joined with the exercises of mortification and penance ! thus we should see other sort of conversions, than we commonly meet with now-a-days.

Consider 3dly, the sentiments of St. Paul with regard to the life he looked upon himself obliged to lead, in consequence of the mercy God had shewn to him in his conversion. He had ever before his eyes the greatness of this mercy : he considered himself as having been, to his thinking, the greatest of all sinners, and how God had spared him all the while he went on in his sins, and, without any merit on his part, had, by an evident miracle, wrought in an instant that total change in him ; and therefore he was convinced, as he both declared in his words, and shewed forth in his practice, that he could do no less than devote his whole life to the love and service of his Saviour, to testify his gratitude for the love he had shewed to him. This consideration carried him through all his labours and afflictions, and animated him to meet death in all its shapes ; (for he was *dying daily* as he tells us) because Christ had loved him, and had died for him ; and therefore the love of Christ pressed him, that he might live no longer to himself, but to him who had shewed him mercy. O that all converts would have the like sentiments !

Conclude to learn in practice the lessons which St. Paul teaches you in his conversion, and in particular to have a great esteem of the grace of reconciliation, and of that unspeakable mercy and love which God has shewed you, in receiving you again, after you had fallen from him by sin. Learn also from him to testify your gratitude, by dedicating yourselves henceforward, in good earnest, to the love and service of him who has done such great things for you.

On the Evil of Mortal Sin.

Jan. 26. **C**ONSIDER first, the enormous malice of mortal sin, inasmuch as it is infinitely opposite to the infinite goodness of God; and thou wilt find it to be a bottomless pit, which no created understanding can fathom. As none but God himself can fully comprehend his own infinite goodness, so none but God himself can perfectly comprehend the infinite enormity that is found in this opposite evil. And as God essentially loves his own goodness with an infinite love, and cannot cease to love it, no more than he can cease to be God: so he essentially hates mortal sin with an infinite hatred, and cannot cease to hate it, wherever he sees it. And didst thou think, my soul, that thou wast committing so great, so dreadful, so abominable an evil, when first thou rebelledst against thy God by mortal sin? O how couldst thou dare so often to repeat this enormous treason! or how couldst thou endure to carry about with thee, for so long a time, so odious, so hideous a monster? O how much art thou indebted to the boundless mercies of thy God, and to the precious blood of his Son, that he has tolerated thee so long, and not cast thee long ago into hell!

Consider 2dly, that there is not upon earth, no nor in hell itself, a greater evil than mortal sin: it is without any comparison the greatest of all evils; it is the parent both of the devil and of hell; for hell was only made for mortal sin, and the devil was

an angel till he was transformed into a devil by mortal sin. So that, in truth, mortal sin is a monster more hideous than hell, more filthy and abominable than the devil himself. This dreadful evil, which the damned see and feel, for all eternity, in the midst of their souls, torments them more than all the devils: it is this that oppresses them with its everlasting weight; it is this that feeds the ever-gnawing worm of their guilty conscience; it is this is the fuel of that fire that never is extinguished; it is this that eternally possesses their souls, and both keeps God eternally from them, and them eternally from God. Oh that sinners had but a just notion of this dreadful evil here! it would effectually keep them from feeling its enormous weight hereafter. If they did but sufficiently apprehend what they are going to do, when they offer to commit a mortal sin, they would choose a thousand deaths before so great an evil.

Consider 3dly, that what makes sin the greatest of all evils, is because it strikes at God himself. It is a rebellion; it is a high treason against him. Satan, the first sinner, proudly sought to place himself in the throne of God; and all that unhappily follow the example of that arch-rebel, by consenting to mortal sin, are in some measure guilty of the like perversity; inasmuch as they turn away from God, as he did, affecting, in the like manner, an independency on God, and impiously prefer their own will, and the gratifying their own inclinations and passions, before his holy will, and his divine ordinances. Thus they renounce their allegiance to him, and disclaim his authority and sovereignty over them; they refuse to be subject to his laws: they condemn his wisdom; they slight his justice; they abuse his mercy and goodness; and instead of seeking in the first place, (as upon all accounts they are bound to do) the glory of their Maker's name, the propagation of his kingdom, and the fulfilling of his will, they set up that idol *self* in the place of the living God! they seek their own worldly honour, interest, and pleasure, more than his: and to this unhappy

idol of their own self-love, they sacrifice their soul and conscience, their God and all. And can there be any other evil comparable to this?

Conclude utterly to renounce, detest, and abhor, for the time to come, all mortal sin; and to fly it more than hell itself. And as to all thy past guilt in this kind, bewail it from thy heart as the greatest of all evils, and do penance for it all thy life-time.

On the manifold Aggravations that are found in Mortal Sin.

Jan. 27. **C**ONSIDER first, that, besides the bottomless depth of the malice of mortal sin, from its opposition to the infinite goodness of God, and the high treason it contains against his divine Majesty, there are divers other enormities and most heinous aggravations in every mortal sin, that beyond measure extend and multiply its guilt. The first of these is, the sinner's black ingratitude to God, which is a circumstance that violently aggravates the guilt of every sin he commits against his Maker and Redeemer, his ancient lover, his dearest friend, and perpetual benefactor; from whom he has received, and daily receives, all that he has, and all that he is; and this out of pure love, without any desert on his part; and such a love as can suffer no comparison, since it has brought the lover down from heaven, to die for this very wretch that dares thus ungratefully to offend him, and to crucify him again by sin. I know not whether any of the devils in hell, if God had done so much for them, would ever have been so ungrateful as to offend him any more.

Consider 2dly, the manifold injustice that is found in every mortal sin, in the violation of all the rights and titles that God has to us, and to our love and service; as he is our first beginning and our last end, who made us, and made us for himself: as he is the very being of our beings, the great Monarch of the whole creation, the Lord of us and of all things; as he has purchased us for himself, and marked us out for his own; and we, on our part, have been solemn-

ly dedicated and consecrated to him, that we might be his both for time and eternity. The wretched sinner breaks through all these considerations; withdraws himself from his Maker, his King, his Lord, and his Redeemer; villainously and sacrilegiously alienates from him what, upon all these titles, is strictly his, and makes over all to his mortal enemy; and in exchange for some petty trifle, he sells to him both his soul and his God. And does not such an enormous injustice cry to heaven for vengeance? More especially in Christians, in whom it is joined with the aggravating circumstances of a profanation of the temple of God, and of a notorious perfidiousness, by the violation of their solemn vows and engagements made to him.

Consider 3dly, that in every mortal sin there is found in some measure the guilt of the breach of all the ten commandments, according to that of St. James ii. 10. *He that offends in one point is guilty of all.* Because whosoever wilfully breaks through any part of the divine law by mortal sin, violates the first commandment, by turning away from the true and living God, and refusing him the worship that is due to him: he is guilty of idolatry, by *worshipping the creature*, which is the object, or occasion of his sin, *rather than the Creator, who is blessed for ever*, Rom. i. He profanes the sacred name of God, and blasphemes him, if not in words, at least in facts, by treading his authority under foot. He violates the true and everlasting Sabbath of God's rest, by the servile work of sin, by which he makes himself a slave to Satan. He dishonours, in a most outrageous manner, the best of fathers. He is guilty of the murder of his own soul, and of the Son of God himself, whom he crucifies by sin. He is guilty of a spiritual adultery, by prostituting to Satan his soul, which has been espoused to Christ. He is guilty of theft, robbery, and sacrilege, as we have seen above, by taking away from God what belongs to him. He bears false witness in fact against the law of God, in favour of lies and deceit; for all sin

On the Presumption, &c. of the wilful Sinner. 61

is a lie. And, that nothing may be wanting to complete his wickedness, he is guilty of coveting what is not his, and what he has no right to; and what the law of God restrains him from. So manifold is the guilt that is found in any one wilful sin.

Conclude to detest the ingratitude, injustice, perfidiousness, and all the other aggravations, that are found in mortal sin; and to make it thy continual prayer, that thou mayest rather die ten thousand deaths, than once incur this dreadful complication of all evils.

On the Presumption, Folly, and Madness of the wilful Sinner.

Jan. 28. **C**ONSIDER first, the desperate presumption of a worm of the earth, that dares to attack, by wilful sin, the almighty Lord and Maker of heaven and earth; who holds the thread of his life in his hand, and can in that moment let him drop into hell. And what can the wretch expect from making war with God? with a God who is eternal, immense, and every way infinite: a God whose eye is ever upon all his ways, and who has an infinite hatred for mortal sin: a God, without whom we can neither live, move, nor be! What, then, can he expect from making this God his enemy, but the loss of all manner of good, and the incurring of all misery, both temporal and eternal! Alas! from the moment he engages in this desperate war, the sword of God is drawn against him, and continually hangs over his guilty head, and the perils of death, judgment, and hell, encompass him on all sides. The captain himself, whom he follows in the warfare, is already damned; his fellow-soldiers are daily falling down the precipice, and crowding into hell; and what has he to hope for?

Consider 2dly, the folly and madness that is found in every wilful sin: forasmuch as the wilful sinner, by his own act and deed, freely and deliberately parts with his God, an infinite good, and the

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source of all his good ; gives up his title to heaven, together with all his treasures of virtue, grace, and merit, and sells his soul into the bargain, to be a slave to Satan here, and a victim of hell hereafter : and in exchange for all this, he purchases nothing but bubbles and shadows, that are unable to afford him one moment of solid content, that leave nothing behind them but uneasiness and remorse, and continually expose him to all kind of misery, both for time and eternity ? And is it possible to conceive a greater madness than this ? Alas ! it is exchanging heaven for hell, God for the devil ; the supreme and infinite good, for the very abyss of endless and infinite evils.

Consider 3dly, the folly and madness of sinners in looking for any success in their ways, or blessing on their undertakings, whilst they oppose, by wilful sin, the holy will of God, and violate his divine law and commandments. All men have an inbred desire of their own well-being ; this the sinner pretends to seek in the unhappy choice he makes, whenever he indulges himself in sin : but alas ! in vain does he seek it where it is not to be found. He seeks for happiness in the way that leads to all kind of misery ; he seeks for honour, in that which is in itself most disgraceful, and which strips him of all true honour : he seeks an imaginary gain, in that which brings with it the greatest of all losses : he seeks for pleasure, and meets with pain, discontent, and uneasiness : he seeks for peace and joy, and finds nothing but disturbance and sorrow : he seeks for a false liberty, and falls into true slavery : he seeks for life, but all in vain ; because he seeks it in the region of death. And can any thing be more extravagant and mad than to seek for any good, whilst one wilfully turns one's back upon the source of all good ! Alas ! the soul here experiences, to her cost, in the opposition and disappointment she meets with, in all her projects and all her pursuits, the truth of those menaces of God by the prophet Osee,

(Osee ii. 6, &c.) *I will hedge up thy way with thorns, and I will stop it up with a wall ; and she shall not find her paths. And she shall follow after her lovers, and shall not overtake them ; and she shall seek them, and shall not find them, &c.* For it is even thus the poor sinner, in all he turns to, when he turns away from God, meets with a hedge of thorns in his way, which he cannot pass over, and runs after a shadow that flies away from him.

Conclude to be more wise, and to seek thy happiness where it is to be found ; that is, in the love and service of God : if thou seek it any where else, thou shalt lose thy labour, and be in danger of losing thyself too, and of condemning thy folly and madness for a long eternity.

On the dismal Havoc Sin has made in the World.

Jan. 29. **C**ONSIDER first, the havoc this monstrous evil of wilful sin made, in its first conception, in heaven itself ; when one sin, consented to but in thought, changed in an instant millions of most beautiful angels into ugly devils ; cast them out of heaven, and condemned them eternally to hell. O dreadful poison, that canst thus blast in a moment so many legions of heavenly spirits ! O dreadful guilt that canst draw such a dismal and irrevocable judgment from a God, whose very nature is goodness, and who loves all his works, upon his favourite creatures ! and thou, my soul, that knowedst this, how didst thou ever dare to sin ! and how hath thy God been able to endure thee, under the guilt of so many treasons ?

Consider 2dly, the havoc sin has made upon earth, when this monster, banished from heaven, was entertained by our first parents, in the earthly paradise ! Alas ! in one moment it stripped them and all their race of that original justice, innocence, and sanctity, in which they were created, and of all the gifts of divine grace ; it wounded them in all the

powers of the soul ; it gave them up to the tyranny of Satan ; it cast them out of paradise, and condemned them both to a temporal and eternal death. In the meantime it let loose upon them a whole army of all manner of evils, both of soul and body ; which are all of them the dismal consequences of sin ; and has entailed upon all mankind an inexpressible weakness with regard to the doing of good, and a violent inclination to evil ; which has filled the world with innumerable sins, and with innumerable most dreadful judgments, both upon particulars, and upon whole nations, in punishment of sin.

Consider 3dly, that sin, by infecting and corrupting so many of the principal creatures of God, has in some measure blasted the whole creation, and subjected the whole to many evils, which the Apostle (*Rom. viii. 20, 21.*) calls *the servitude of corruption*, inasmuch as God's creatures are abused by men and devils, and made subservient to sin and corruption ; as also *vanity*, inasmuch as by occasion of sin, they are also liable to a perpetual instability, and a variety of defects. Hence the whole creation, by a figure of speech, is said by the Apostle *to groan*, and *to be in labour* ; longing as it were for its deliverance from its unhappy subjection to sin, *into the liberty of the glory of the children of God* ; which shall then be accomplished, when the reign of sin shall be utterly abolished ; and the world being purged by the last fire, God shall make for his children *new heavens, and a new earth, in which justice shall dwell*, 2 Peter iii. 13. O when shall that happy hour come ! when shall this hellish monster sin be for ever excluded from all other parts of the creation, and shut up in its proper place, never to come out to blast the world any more !

Conclude to abhor the evil that has made such dreadful havoc both in heaven and earth ; and to spare no pains for the abolishing of it both in thyself, and in all others.

On the dismal Haroc Sin makes in the Soul of a Christian.

Jan. 30. **C**ONSIDER first, how strangely the soul is changed that falls from the state of grace into mortal sin. The metamorphose is not unlike to that of an angel into a devil. A soul in grace is a child of God, a spouse of Jesus Christ, a temple of the Holy Spirit: but in the moment she consents to mortal sin, she forfeits all her honour and dignity; she becomes a slave of hell, a prostitute to Satan, a den of unclean spirits. A soul in grace is beautiful, like an angel, and agreeable to the eyes of God and his saints: but a soul in mortal sin is ugly like the devil, and most odious, filthy, and loathsome to her Maker, and all his heavenly court. A soul in grace is very rich, she is worth an eternal kingdom; she always carries her God about with her, and is entitled to the eternal possession of him: but when she falls into mortal sin, she loses at once all her store of virtue and merit; she becomes wretchedly poor and miserable, and instead of possessing God, she is possessed by the devil.

Consider 2dly, that sin gives a mortal wound to the soul; it is the death of the soul. For as it is the soul of man that gives life to the body; and when the soul is departed the body is dead, and becomes a lump of clay, without either sense or motion: so it is the grace of God that gives life to the soul, and that soul is dead, which by mortal sin has lost her God, and drove away his grace from her. O dismal separation! O dreadful death indeed, which wanteth nothing but eternity to make it hell! Sinners, how can you endure yourselves under this wretched condition? If a dead carcase, from which the soul is gone, be so very loathsome and frightful, that few would endure to pass one night in the same bed with such a becfellow: how can you bear to carry continually about with you, night and day, the filthy carcase of a soul dead in mortal sin, and quite putrified

and corrupted by her sinful habits? Ah! open your eyes now at least, to see your deplorable case; and to detest the monster sin, the cause of all your misery. O run to him, without any further delay, by humble prayer, and repentance, who alone can raise the dead to life.

Consider 3dly, how true that is of the scripture, that *they who commit sin and iniquity are enemies to their own soul*, Tob. xii. 10. And that *he that loveth iniquity hateth his own soul*, Ps. x. 6. Since of all the evils that we can possibly incur, either here, or hereafter, there is none comparable to the evil we bring upon ourselves by mortal sin: so that if all men upon earth, and if all the devils in hell, should all conspire together, with a general licence from God, to do us all the mischief, and to inflict upon us all the torments they could invent, they could never do us half so much hurt as we do ourselves by one mortal sin. Because all that they can do, as long as we do not consent to sin, cannot hurt the soul; whereas we ourselves, by consenting to any one mortal sin, bring upon our souls a dreadful death, both for time and eternity. Good God! never suffer us to be so wretchedly blind, as to become thus the wilful murderers of our own souls.

Conclude never more to join thyself with thy mortal enemies the world, the flesh, or the devil, in waging war against thy own soul by wilful sin: but make it thy continual prayer to God, that he would never suffer thee at any rate to consent to so great an evil; - though thou wert even to endure a thousand deaths for the refusal.

On the Judgments of God upon mortal Sin.

Jan. 31. **C**ONSIDER first, that besides all the sad effects of mortal sin, already mentioned, which are more than sufficient to demonstrate how heinous this worst of evils is in the sight of God; there still remain divers other convincing arguments of the hatred God bears to it, from the manifold

judgments he has of old, and daily does execute upon them that are guilty of it; and shall continue to execute to the end of the world, and even to all eternity. Witness of old the judgment of the deluge, which in punishment of the general corruption of all flesh, swept off at once all the sinners of the earth, and hurried them down to hell. Witness the judgment of fire from heaven on Sodom and the neighbouring cities. Witness the many judgments on the rebel Israelites in the wilderness, particularly that remarkable one of the earth opening, and swallowing up alive Kore and his companions; and the fire from the Lord, destroying in an instant fourteen thousand seven hundred of their abettors, *Numb. xvi.* Witness, in every age of the world, millions that have been hurried away when they least expected it, by violent or untimely death in punishment of their crying sins; besides many instances of flourishing cities, yea, and of whole nations too, destroyed by wars, pestilences, famines, earthquakes, &c. all brought upon them by their sins. O great God! who shall not fear thy almighty wrath, which always looks towards wilful sinners? who shall not fear the dreadful evil of mortal sin, which thus provokes thy avenging justice?

Consider 2dly, that though these visible judgments of God upon impenitent sinners, by which they are snatched away before their time by unprovided death in the midst of their sins, be both very common, and very terrible: yet there is another kind of more secret judgments, which he daily executes upon thousands, which is far more terrible, inasmuch as it brings upon them a far more dreadful damnation: and that is, when in punishment of their abuse of grace, and obstinacy in sin, he gives them up at length to a reprobate sense, and to a blindness and hardness of heart; so that they have now no more any fear or thought of God, or his judgments, or any concern at all for their souls, or for eternity. Now this is indeed the broad road to final impeni-

tence, and is in its consequences the very worst of all God's judgments. It was thus he did by the Jews, according to the prediction of the royal prophet, Ps. lxxviii. *letting their eyes be darkened that they should not see; and bowing down their back always: adding iniquity upon their iniquity, &c. viz.* by withdrawing his lights and his graces from them, and so giving them up to their own wicked inclinations: and thus he daily does with thousands of habitual sinners, in punishment of their slighting and resisting his repeated calls, *Prov. i. 24, &c.* suffering them to go on in their wretched ways, and to add daily sin upon sin (without ever thinking of repentance), and consequently hell upon hell; which proves at long run a far more dreadful judgment upon them, than if, upon their first sin, the earth had opened, and swallowed them down alive into hell.

Consider 3dly, the judgments of God upon mortal sin, in the eternal duration of the torments of hell. O sinners go down now, whilst you are alive, into that bottomless pit; and take a serious view of the rigour of God's justice there, of that worm that never dies, of that fire that never is extinguished, of that everlasting rage and despair, and of all that complication of the worst of evils, that is to be found in that woeful dungeon; and then tell me what you think of the hatred God must bear to every mortal sin, when he, who is infinitely good, and infinitely just, and cannot punish any one beyond what he richly deserves, condemns every soul that dies under any such guilt, to all this extremity of misery, for all eternity. Surely the dismal prospect of this scene of woe must suffice to convince you of the enormity of mortal sin. But if any thing be here wanting to a full conviction, turn your eyes upon Jesus Christ the Son of God, and see how he was treated by the justice of his Father, for our sins, which he had taken upon himself to expiate: see him agonizing in the garden, and sweating blood, under their enormous weight: see the multi-

tude and variety of torments he endures for them, till his expiring upon a cruel and disgraceful cross; and how, notwithstanding the infinite dignity of his person, the divine justice would admit of nothing less than of all these sufferings of his own Son for the expiation of any one mortal sin: and I am persuaded that the sight of a God, crucified for sin, must more effectually demonstrate to you the hatred God bears to this monstrous evil; than the sight of hell itself, with all its dreadful and everlasting torments.

Conclude by giving thanks to God for having spared thee so long in thy sins; and resolving now to labour in earnest to avert, by a serious and speedy conversion, those judgments, which thou mayest have reason to apprehend, are actually hanging over thy head for thy sins.

On making light of Venial Sins.

Feb. 1. **C**ONSIDER first, that although there be no manner of comparison between the guilt of a mortal sin, and that of a venial sin; as there is no manner of comparison between a mote and a beam, *Matt. vii. 3.*; yet the guilt even of the least venial sin, considering that it is an offence of a God, infinitely great, and infinitely good, is so displeasing in his sight, that no soul that is stained with it, can ever be admitted into his presence till this guilt be purged away; and no man living can be allowed, by any power in heaven or in earth, to commit any one venial sin; no not to save a kingdom, or even to save the whole world: because the offence of God is a greater evil than the loss of the whole world: and we are not to do any thing that is evil to save the whole world. Christians, do you think of this, when upon every trifling apprehension of incurring the displeasure of man, you take refuge in a lie, which is sure to displease your God? Do you think of this, when you go on with so little concern, indulging yourselves in vanity, curiosity,

sensuality, loss of your precious time, anger, impatience, and other sinful habits, upon the notion that these are but venial sins, and therefore need not be regarded? Oh! you will find one day to your cost, how much you have been deceived, if you do not correct in time this dangerous and pernicious error.

Consider 2dly, the danger to which the soul exposes herself when she makes light of venial sins; even the danger of the very worst of evils, that is, of mortal sin, and of all its dreadful consequences, both for time and eternity; according to that of the wise man, Eccclus. xix. *He that contemneth small things, shall fall by little and little.* It is true, venial sin does not of itself immediately destroy, or drive away from the soul the grace and love of God; and therefore does not of itself bring present death to the soul, as mortal sin does: but then it weakens, and cools the fervour of divine love; it lessens devotion; it hinders the inspirations of the Holy Ghost from working effectually in the soul; it leaves the soul feeble and drowsy, sick and languishing; so that upon the coming of a greater temptation she easily yields, and quickly falls into mortal sin. And how can we expect it should be otherwise, when we have so little regard to God, or his friendship and love, as not to care how much we displease him, provided we can but escape his avenging justice? Or how can the fire of the love of God be kept alive for any long time in the soul, when instead of being nourished with its proper fuel, it is continually losing ground, by a diminution of its heat and strength?

Consider 3dly, that this danger of falling quickly into mortal sin, by making little or no account of venial sins, is the greater, because of the difficulty there often is of distinguishing betwixt what is mortal sin and what is only venial: since even the best divines are often at a loss to find the limits between the one and the other. So that all such as are in the unhappy disposition of venturing without scruple as far as the utmost limits of venial sin can be extended,

are daily exposed to an evident danger of slipping beyond the bounds, and of falling into the pit of mortal sin; the more because of the manifold subtleties and deceits of self-love, which is ever ready to favour, and to excuse the inclinations of corrupt nature; and in all such cases to make that appear slight which is really grievous: and the more still when persons give themselves up to a tepid, negligent life, as they generally do who make light of venial sins: for this negligence takes the soul off from her guard, disarms her, and lays her interior open to the spiritual sins of pride, envy, and such like disorders, which are mortal sins; and which easily prevail over careless souls, and are seldom thoroughly cured.

Conclude with a sincere resolution of never wilfully, and with full deliberation, consenting to any one known sin, how venial soever it may seem to be; and much more of never indulging any habit or custom of any such sins. It is hard to reconcile the indulging such habits as these with the great commandment of the love of God above all things; at least it cannot be expected that divine love should abide to dwell for any long time in a heart where God is so often slighted.

ON CANDLEMAS-DAY.

Feb. 2. **C**ONSIDER first, that on this day the blessed Virgin Mary, according to the rites prescribed by the ancient law, came to the temple of God, to be purified after her child-bearing, and to make her offering, according to what her poverty allowed, of a pair of turtle doves, or two young pigeons; the one for a whole burnt-offering, the other as a sacrifice for sin, *Levit. xii.* Admire her ready *obedience* to a law, in which in reality she was not concerned, being exempted, by that singular privilege of hers of bringing forth her Son without any detriment to her virginal purity. Admire her *humility*, in being willing to pass for a person unclean, she that was more pure than the angels;

and to be excluded for forty days from touching any thing that was holy, or coming near the house of God; and to be cleansed by a sin-offering, as if she needed any such expiation. Admire her love of *purity*, which brought her on this day to the temple of God, to be there *purified* with these legal sacrifices; because she was desirous of omitting nothing that could any ways contribute to increase or maintain *purity*. And learn to imitate these great virtues, *viz.* her ready obedience, her profound humility, and her great zeal and love for purity.

Consider 2dly, that on this day the blessed Virgin made a rich present to God, in his temple, infinitely surpassing all the offerings that had ever been made there before; when, according to the law of the *first-born*, Exod. xiii. she presented her Son, the first-born of the whole creation, by whom all things were made, both visible and invisible, to his eternal Father. Parents learn to imitate this presentation, by making an offering of your children to God, by the hands of Mary, to be dedicated for ever to his love and service. Christians, learn to present him with your hearts, together with all their offspring, your thoughts, words, and deeds; learn to make an offering to him of your whole being, every day, and every hour of your life. But then you must not stop here: you must also present to him his Son Jesus Christ, and yourselves with him, and through him, daily in the sacred mysteries, and hourly in the spiritual temple of your souls. The temple of God in Jerusalem was highly honoured on this day, by the presence of the Son of God, according to that prophecy of Aggeus, c. ii. *The desired of all nations shall come: and I will fill this house with glory: saith the Lord of Hosts.—Great shall be the glory of this last house more than of the first, saith the Lord of Hosts; and in this place I will give peace, saith the Lord of Hosts.* My soul, art not thou ambitious of a share in this glory, peace, and happiness? Invite then this same Son of God, *the desired of all nations,*

into thy inward house; and he will come and make thee the temple of his glory, and bring thee his true peace, which will make thee happy indeed.

Consider 3dly, that on this day the venerable Simeon, who had received a promise from the Holy Ghost that he should see the Saviour of the World before he died, coming by divine instinct into the temple, whilst our Lord was presented there, took him into his arms, and declared him to be the promised Messiah, the glory of Israel, and the light of all nations. At the same time that holy widow, Anna, the prophetess, who for a great number of years had attended on the Lord in his temple by continual prayer and fasting, was also favoured with the like grace, and made the like public profession of her faith in our infant Saviour. This sacred meeting of so many persons of such eminent sanctity in the temple of God, in company with the Son of God, and his blessed mother, the church celebrates in the procession of this day, which we make with lighted candles in our hands, that are solemnly blessed in the name of Christ, and received from the hand of God's priests, as emblems of the light of Christ. See then, Christian souls, with what affection of devotion you ought to receive, and to bear in your hands these hallowed candles, as figures of Christ. O! learn, on this occasion, of holy Simeon, to seek Christ alone, to sigh after him alone, to aspire with your whole souls after his embraces; despising all things else that you may find him. O remember that he is the true light of the world in his life and doctrine; and determine from this time forward ever to follow him.

Conclude to study well all the lessons which are to be learnt from the presentation of the Son of God, and the purification of his blessed mother, and to conform yourselves to them in the practice of your lives; that so being purified from all your sins, you may also be worthy to be one day presented to God, in the eternal temple of his glory.

On the Parable of the Labourers in the Vineyard.
St. Matt. xx.

For SEPTUAGESIMA Sunday.

Feb. 3. **C**ONSIDER first, that on this day we enter upon a time of devotion and penance, in the way of a preparation for the solemn fast of Lent; and therefore we are called upon by the church, both in the Epistle, and in the Gospel of this Sunday, to begin, now at least, to be quite in earnest, in the great concern of our souls. In the Epistle, we are put in mind by St. Paul (1 Cor. ix, and x.), that we are all here running in a race, in which we must push forward with all our power, or we shall lose the prize: that we are engaged in a conflict for an incorruptible crown, which is not to be obtained without much labour and self-denial. That if we are not in earnest, notwithstanding all the distinguishing favours we have received, and daily do receive from God, we shall be in great danger to be excluded, like the Israelites, from the true land of promise. In the parable of the Gospel, we are put in mind that we have but one business in this world, which is here represented under the figure of labouring in the vineyard of our Lord: that in this labour we are to spend the short day of our mortal life; and by persevering till night in this labour, we are to secure to our souls the wages of a happy eternity. O let us attend well that we may learn these great lessons!

Consider 2dly, in the parable of this day's Gospel, the infinite goodness of God, manifested to us in that perpetual attention of his, in every age since the beginning of the world, and in every part of the life of man; to go out by his divine graces and calls; and to invite, to hire, and to send labourers into his vineyard. And after all what need has he of our labours; or of what service can we be to him? or what can we give him which he does not first give to us? why then does he press us to labour in his vineyard?

O! it is his pure goodness and love, that he may make us for ever happy by our serving him here, and enjoying him hereafter. But what then is the meaning of this *vineyard* of our Lord? and what is this labour that he calls for at our hands? *The vineyard of the Lord of Hosts*, saith the prophet Isaias (ch. v. 7.), *is the house of Israel*, that is, the people of God. Yes: our own souls are the vineyard we are commanded to cultivate: no one can be excused from his share in this labour: every one must at least take care of one. To labour here to the purpose, we must in the first place root out the poisonous weeds of sinful habits, and cut up all the thorns and briars of our vices and passions; and then we must plant in their stead the good plants of Christian virtues; and bring them on, by proper care and manure, till they are capable of bringing forth fruit, that may answer the expectation of the great Lord and master of the vineyard, and be agreeable to him. O how happy shall we be, if by our labours, and his blessing, we so cultivate this little part of the Lord's vineyard that falls to our share, as to engage him to come to us, and recreate himself there with us!

Consider 3dly, Christian souls, how early in the morning your good God invited you to work in his vineyard, by the early knowledge he gave you of himself, and of the end for which he brought you into the world; and how frequently he has pressed you ever since, by his repeated graces and calls, in every part of your life, to oblige you to set about this work in good earnest. But can you say you have yet begun? May he not justly reproach you, as he did those whom he found standing in the market-place at the eleventh hour: *why stand you here all the day idle?* Alas! are you not *idle*, when you are doing nothing to the purpose? And has not your whole life hitherto been spent in doing nothing to your purpose: nothing to answer the great end, the only business for which you were made? Have you not then been truly idle all the day, that is, all the

time of your life? O begin now at least to labour : perhaps this is your last hour : your day is far spent : the night is coming on, *when no man can work*, John ix. 4. Work, therefore, now, whilst you have time, lest being surprised by the night, you may have no more time to work in, and so starve for eternity.

Conclude to make good use of this fresh summons by which you are called upon this day, by God and his church, to go, and to labour in the vineyard of your souls; lest otherwise, by not corresponding with the call, and by receiving this grace of God in vain, you verify in yourselves that sentence with which our Lord concludes the parable of this Sunday: *Many are called, but few are chosen.*

On the Multitude of our Sins.

Feb. 4. **C**ONSIDER first, O my soul, how long it is since thou wast first so miserable as to fall from thy God by sin: and how much thy sins have been multiplied since that unhappy hour. Alas! didst thou not at thy first coming to the use of reason, forfeit thy baptismal innocence, and fall a prey to that hellish monster? It was thy indispensable duty; in consequence of thy creation, of thy redemption, and of thy baptismal engagements, to turn to God, as soon as thou wast capable of knowing him, as to thy first beginning, and last end; and to dedicate thyself eternally to his love and service. And didst thou comply with this strict obligation? Lucifer and his companions were cast down headlong into hell, because immediately after they were created, instead of turning to God, as they were bound to do, and dedicating themselves wholly to him, they turned away from him, to take pride in themselves: and hast thou not imitated these rebels, at the first dawning of thy reason, by turning also thy back upon God, and by preferring thy own irregular inclinations, and every senseless toy, before him?

Consider 2dly, how, after so wretched a beginning, thou hast gone on for so many years, daily adding

sin to sin; against God, against thy neighbour, against thyself; by work, by word, or by desire: so that not one day, perhaps not even one hour, has yet passed, without frequently offending God, either by commission, or omission, by ignorance, frailty, or malice. Alas! my poor soul, is it not true that even from thy childhood thou wast given to lies, passion and impurity? Is it not true, that even thy thoughts went continually astray from God, after lying fooleries and vanities; that thy prayers were without attention; thy confessions without sincerity, repentance, or amendment; and thy whole life and conversation without any true sense of God, or any solid good? And hast thou grown any better by growing older? or hast thou not rather daily multiplied thy sins; and still more and more corrupted and defiled all thy powers and faculties, and all thy senses and members, with repeated offences and treasons; and continually perverted and abused all the gifts of God against the giver? *O pass over in thy mind (but let it be in the bitterness of thy soul) all thy years:* and lament to find, that thy sins have been indeed far more numerous than the hairs of thy head, besides an infinite multitude of hidden sins, or sins which thou hast occasioned in others, which keep out of sight at present, but will all one day appear against thee.

Consider 3dly, to the end that thou mayest make a better judgment of the immense number of thy offences and transgressions, how little thou hast complied, in any part of thy life, with the great duty of *loving God with thy whole heart*; of dedicating thy whole self to his service, and of directing, by a pure intention, all thy thoughts, words, and actions to him: how little restraint thou hast put upon thy natural inclinations, too strongly bent on evil from thy very childhood: how little guard thou hast kept upon thy roving thoughts and imaginations; how little attention thou hast had not to offend in words; nor to give occasion of offence to others, &c. Re-

flect also how much of thy precious time thou hast squandered away; how many graces thou hast received in vain; how little thou hast corresponded with the divine calls and inspirations; how little use thou hast made of the talents with which thou hast been intrusted; and how very ill thou hast discharged thyself of thy stewardship, in every part of thy life. And then see what armies of sins will presently rise up before thy eyes, and stand staring thee in the face. And how wilt thou dare, after so much guilt, and so much ingratitude, which is a perpetual aggravation of every one of thy sins, to lift up thy eyes any more to heaven, or so much as to name the holy name of God, which thou hast so often profaned?

Conclude to be always humble, by a true sense and daily remembrance of thy innumerable sins; to offer up daily for them the sacrifice of a contrite and humble heart; and to embrace henceforward a penitential life, as the best security after so much guilt.

On the Goodness of God in waiting for Sinners.

Feb. 5. **C**ONSIDER first, the wonders of God's goodness in his dealings with sinners. See with what patience he bears with them, and that very often for a long time; notwithstanding their repeated provocations, their continually abusing all his bounty and mercy, and that infinite hatred he always bears to mortal sin, wherever he sees it. O my soul, how much art thou indebted to this patience of thy God, in bearing with thee all these years past, ever since thy first fall into sin! Alas! hast thou not all this time been playing upon the very brink of that dreadful precipice which conducts to the bottomless pit? Hast thou not been all this while within a hair's breadth of a miserable eternity? Is it not true that every night thou hast gone to bed thou didst not know but that before the morning thou mightest find thyself in hell? Millions have fallen into that dismal dungeon of endless woe, whilst thy God hath spared thee: millions are now burning in

those unquenchable flames for fewer sins than thou hast committed. O blessed to all eternity be the infinite goodness of my God; and may all his Angels and Saints praise and glorify him for ever, for having endured me so long; for having preserved me all this time, and continually watched over me; or else my soul had long since dwelt in hell!

Consider 2dly, the many ways by which God seeks to reclaim sinners, and to call them home to him. Reflect on the remorsees and inward reproaches of conscience, with which he visits them; the terrors of his judgments, and the allurements of his mercies, which he sets before them. See how he is continually calling upon them, by his word, by his preachers, by good books, by good examples, and wholesome admonitions; and by a number of interior invitations and graces. Has he not dealt thus with thee, my soul, all this time thou hast been going astray from him? And what is the meaning of all this goodness of thy God to such an undeserving, ungrateful, and obstinate rebel? Why, it is nothing else but his own pure mercy and love, in consideration of the precious blood of his Son. And shall not all this love of his for thee soften thy heart, and oblige thee, now at least, to resolve in good earnest to return to him: lest otherwise mercy, being long abused, should give place to justice; and the land which has been so often watered with rain from heaven, and still continues to bring forth nothing but thorns and briars, should fall at length under a dreadful curse, and be condemned to the fire? *Heb. vi.*

Consider 3dly, what encouragement God gives to sinners to return to him. *As I live, saith the Lord, I desire not the death of a sinner: but that he may be converted from his ways, and may live. O why will you die, O house of Israel? Ezech. xxxiii. Return to me and live, chap. xviii. Thou hast gone astray after many lovers, but return to me, and I will receive thee, Jeremias iii.* See with what love the good shepherd in the Gospel goes after the lost sheep; and

with what joy he lays it upon his shoulders, and brings it home to the fold. See how the father runs out to meet the prodigal child, when he returns home from the husks of the swine; see how he embraces him, clothes him with the best robe, and makes a feast for him, *Luke xv.* Reflect how the Son of God, when here upon earth, treated the penitent Magdalen, the thief upon the cross, and all other sinners that had recourse to his mercy: and how he has declared, that there is more joy in heaven over one penitent sinner, than over ninety-nine just, &c. And let all these instances and testimonies of his goodness to poor sinners, encourage and determine us to stay no longer away from him by sin; but to arise without delay, and return to so good, to so loving a father, by a thorough conversion.

Conclude to abuse no longer the mercies of God, by continuing in sin, but to turn to him, now at least, with thy whole heart, and never to depart from him any more.

On turning from Sin to God.

Feb. 6. **C**ONSIDER first, that every wilful sinner is guilty of two enormous evils: according to that of *Jerem. ii. 12, 13.* *Be astonished O ye heavens—For my people have done two evils. They have forsaken me, the fountain of living water, and have digged to themselves cisterns (pits), broken cisterns that can hold no water.* Yes, Christians, in every mortal sin there are always these two exceeding great evils: *viz.* the turning away from a God infinitely good, and the very fountain of all goodness and life; and the embracing in his stead, that hellish monster sin, by the allurements of some deceitful appearance of an imaginary happiness, justly compared by the prophet to a broken cistern, that can hold no water, but only filth and mud. Wherefore, in the conversion of a sinner, there must also be always two principal ingredients, opposite to those two great evils, *viz.* the turning away from sin, with horror,

detestation, and sorrow, for having offended a God, infinitely good in himself, and infinitely good to us; and the returning back to God, to embrace his holy law, and to dedicate the years that remain of life to his obedience, service, and love. Happy conversion that thus brings the poor sinner back from the very worst of evils, to his sovereign good!

Consider 2dly, that this turning away of the soul from sin, which is a necessary ingredient of the sinner's conversion, must be *effectual*: that is, the soul must turn away from her sins in *effect*. She must not content herself with a slight sorrow for her sins; nor with faint purposes of amendment; nor with a half-will; nor yet with making some weak efforts towards beginning a new life: but she must renounce her sins with her whole heart: she must detest them above all evils: she must even hate them worse than hell: she must fly and abhor like a pestilence all such company, or other occasions, as may expose her to the danger of relapsing into them: she must be absolutely and resolutely determined never more to return to them, upon any consideration whatsoever. This is being *penitent indeed*: but to pretend to be true converts, without leaving our sins, is all a mockery.

Consider 3dly, that the principal ingredient of the conversion of a sinner, is the turning to God with his whole heart: as the principal ingredient of sin is the turning away from God. Wherefore the true convert must not only leave the husks of the swine, which he has hitherto set his heart upon; but he must arise and return to the embraces of his Father with a contrite and humble, but loving heart, resolved henceforward to be the eternal servant of his divine love. He must remember that *many sins are forgiven to him that loveth much*, Luke vii. And that he that has been the greatest debtor, is the most obliged to love with his whole heart that merciful creditor, who shews so much love to him, in being so ready to discharge him of his great debts. In a word, a constant adhesion to God, by love and

obedience, must be the perpetual business of a true convert. His whole life, for the time he has yet to come, must be dedicated and consecrated to divine love. This is his best security for the remission of all his past sins: this is the best preservative from all sin for the future.

Conclude to shew thyself to be a true convert from sin to God, by renouncing all thy criminal affections, and sacrificing them all to the love of God; by hating what thou hast hitherto loved, and embracing with thy whole soul thy Lord and Saviour, crucified for the love of thee.

On the Sentiments of a Penitent Sinner.

Feb. 7. **C**ONSIDER first, that according to the different steps that are usually taken in the sinner's conversion, different sentiments and affections gradually take possession of his soul. And first his faith, which was asleep before, awakened by serious consideration, or by hearing the word of God, or by reading good books, opens his eyes to discover in part at least, how odious, how filthy a monster has hitherto had possession of his soul; and what dreadful dangers have surrounded him all this time he has been in sin, and still threaten him, with the worst of judgments from God, both for time and eternity. This, by the help of the Holy Ghost, produces in his soul a wholesome fear of the justice of God, and of that miserable death, judgment, and hell, which are daily overtaking unrepenting sinners. Now this fear is usually the beginning of the greatest conversions. O how hard must that sinner be, whom neither the sight of the sword of God, hanging over his head, nor of a miserable death, following close at his heels, nor of hell, opened under his feet, and just ready to swallow him down, can move to repentance!

Consider 2dly, that the sinner being alarmed with the terrors of divine justice, seeks to find how he may escape these dreadful evils, that continually

threaten him on every side: and how he may rid himself of his sins, the true source of all these evils. And here the mercy and goodness of God, and the precious blood of the Son of God, shed for poor sinners, present themselves before the eyes of his soul; and encourage him to hope, that the same God, whose mercy has endured him so long in his sins; whose goodness has watched over him all this while, preserving him from innumerable evils, and loading him with innumerable benefits; who has purchased this soul of his for himself, at so dear a rate; and who has shed his own blood to wash him from these very sins, will certainly receive him, now he desires to return to him (according to his repeated promises made to repenting sinners), as he has received millions of others, that have returned to him after sin. And in this hope, he firmly purposes to neglect no one thing required on his part, towards obtaining the absolution and full remission of all his sins, and a perfect reconciliation with his God.

Consider 3dly, that the sinner being thus encouraged, and resolved to go, and present himself before the throne of divine grace, and there to sue for the pardon of all his sins, through the precious blood of the Son of God, betakes himself to fervent prayer, in order to obtain the necessary disposition of a *contrite and humble heart*, without which there is no admittance to mercy and grace. This *contrite and humble heart* is an excellent composition of three great virtues, viz. penance, humility, and divine love: *penance* fills the soul with a horror, and deep sense of sorrow for sin committed, together with an ardent desire to abolish it at any rate: *humility* obliges the soul to condemn herself, by reason of her manifold crimes, as worthy of all manner of evil, and unworthy of the least good; and to sit down in the very lowest place, as the most wretched, the most ungrateful, and the most abominable of all creatures: and *divine love* teaches her to consider and detest in her sins; not so much the evil they bring upon her, as their infinite malice; from the infinite opposition

they have to a God, infinitely good in himself, and infinitely good to her; and their enormous outrages against the Son of God, incarnate for the love of her. With these sentiments the true penitent endeavours to prepare and dispose himself for the confession of his sins, and absolution from them. And this is that *contrite and humble heart which God never despises.* Psalm l.

Conclude, if thou wouldst effectually turn from sin to God, to endeavour to walk in these steps; especially to meditate seriously upon the great truths that relate to eternity; and to labour with all thy power for the acquiring of a contrite and humble heart.

On doing Penance for our Sins.

Feb. 8. **C**ONSIDER first, that sentence of our Lord, Luke xiii. 5. *Except you do penance, you shall all perish.* The virtue of *penance* always was, is, and ever will be, absolutely necessary for every soul, that has at any time in life, fallen from God by wilful sin. It is the only plank that can save them after the shipwreck they have made of their innocence. *Aut pœnitendum aut ardensum*, says an ancient father, *either penance or hell-fire*, there is no medium for wilful sinners: they must choose one of the two. Sin must be punished either here or hereafter; either by the penitent sinner, or by divine justice. Hence the preaching of *penance* to such as had fallen from God by sin, was the great subject of the commission of the prophets, in the old Testament, and of the Apostles and all apostolic preachers in the new. Hence it was by preaching of *penance* and of the necessity of *bringing forth worthy fruits of penance*, that St. John Baptist was to prepare the people for Christ, *Matt.* iii. and our Lord himself opened his mission with the same theme, *Matt.* iv. Because there can be no other way to come to God and a happy eternity, but either the way of innocence, or when we have strayed from this, the way of *penance*.

Consider 2dly, that this virtue of *penance* does not only require of us that we should turn from sin to

God, by a change of heart, and by a change of life; but also that we should labour to make satisfaction to the divine justice, by voluntary mortifications of the flesh, and other penitential exercises, for all the injuries and affronts we have offered him by our sins; and that by this means we should endeavour to discharge, according to our weak ability, the debt we owe to God for them. This is properly *doing penance* for our sins; this is what divine justice always expects: this is what the church of God has always called for from penitent sinners. We cannot be true penitents without hating and detesting our sins above all evils, because they offend a God infinitely good: now this of necessity infers a hatred for this traitorous self-love of ours, and for all its irregular inclinations and passions, as enemies of God and the soul, and especially a hatred for this sinful flesh, that is so apt to betray us into this dreadful evil of sin. And hence again naturally flows, in all true penitents, a sincere and effectual desire of punishing themselves for their sins, a desire of chastising this flesh by penitential exercises, and thereby doing their best to make satisfaction for their sins. This is, and ever was, one necessary ingredient of that virtue of *penance*, without which the sinner could never be reconciled to an offended God.

Consider 3dly, how much this way of *doing penance* for our sins is inculcated in holy writ; where we are so often put in mind of *turning to God with fasting, weeping, and mourning; of doing penance in sackcloth and ashes*, and the like; and where we meet with divers instances of the mercy and favour God is pleased to shew to all such as exercise themselves in these voluntary mortifications and humiliations of the flesh, when they are accompanied, as they ought to be, with a penitential spirit. Here also we learn, that no assurance we can possibly have of the remission of our sins, is to exempt us from doing penance for them, when we see that King David, notwithstanding the prophet had assured him

that *the Lord had taken away his sin* (2 Sam. xii. 13.), yet still continued to do penance for it, as we find by his penitential psalms; which inform us, that his sin was always before him; that he washed every night his couch with tears; that he laboured in his groans; that he mingled ashes with his bread, and tears with his drink, &c. O let us imitate this glorious penitent!

Conclude, if thou wouldst be a true friend to thy own soul, not to be afraid of hurting this sinful flesh, which is thy greatest enemy: but to keep it in subjection, by voluntary mortifications, and to chastise it for its past misdemeanors by penitential austerities.

On the Manner of doing Penance for our Sins.

Feb. 9. **C**ONSIDER first, that the true manner of doing penance for our sins is not to be learnt from the maxims, or from the common practice of the children of this world; who fear nothing more than the hurting of themselves, or the contradicting of their own humours, appetites, and inclinations; and therefore this *bringing forth fruits worthy of penance*, is to them a hard saying, which they cannot endure to hear. But the true manner of doing penance for sin, is to be learnt of the children of light, that is, from the doctrine and practice of the saints; who as they had quite other ideas of the evil of sin than worldlings have, so also they had a very different way of thinking, and of acting, in regard to penance; as they have demonstrated by the penitential austerities, to which they have condemned themselves, all their life-time, for expiation of the punishment due to their sins. And what are so many religious orders in the church of God, in which so many thousands of both sexes, retiring from the world, dedicate themselves to daily mortifications and penances, but as many standing memorials, and living instances, of that true manner of doing penance, which the spirit of God usually inspires to

those whom he *convinces of sin*, that is to say, whom he makes sensible of the heinousness of the evil of sin, and how much ought to be done for the expiation of it.

Consider 2dly, how this same spirit of God dictated to the ancient church those rules and ordinances, commonly called the *penitential canons*, which were in force for many hundred years, by which penitent sinners were subjected to divers fasts and other humiliations, for three, seven, ten, and sometimes for fifteen years or more, for one mortal sin, and yet did not think they did too much. O how ought this to convince sinners that there is something more to be done for the remission of their sins, than they have hitherto been aware of! For though, according to the modern discipline of the church, these *penitential canons* are not now enforced; yet as God is still the same, and sin is still as heinous in his eyes as it was in former ages: so the sinner stands no less indebted at present to the divine justice than formerly, and therefore ought to think upon discharging this debt, in the best manner he is able, by frequent fasting and other corporal mortifications, as well as by alms-deeds, and long-continued prayer.

Consider 3dly, that there are three particular practices of penance, which ought never to be forgotten, by any such as have, at any time in life, been guilty of mortal sin. The first and principal is, that they should go daily in spirit to the feet of Christ, to wash them with penitential tears, flowing from a loving heart; and there earnestly beg pardon for all their past offences through his precious blood. The second, which will naturally flow from the first, is, that having their sins thus always before their eyes, they should daily offer up to God, in penance for them, some voluntary mortifications of their own will, humour, or appetite; at least, in lesser things, if they have not the courage or strength to undertake greater. For instance, that they should, in this spi-

rit, rise early in the morning; retrench superfluities in eating, drinking, sleeping, and diversions; and mortify, upon every occasion, their vanity, curiosity, and sensuality. The third is, that they should also offer up daily for their sins, in a penitential spirit, all the labours to which their state of life is exposed, with all their pains, and sufferings of every kind, which they may have to endure, in life or death; to be united to, and sanctified by, the labours and sufferings of the Son of God; considering themselves all the while as under a course of penance, laid on them by the Almighty for their sins; and going through it with humility, patience, and courage. Whosoever shall diligently persevere in the practice of these three things, will be allowed of one day as true penitents; and receive the crown of true penitents, though their circumstances of life, strength, or health, may not have admitted of any other penitential austerities. But no condition of life, or other circumstances whatsoever, ought to dispense with any sinner from these three most easy, and most wholesome exercises of penance.

Conclude upon doing penance for thy sins in the best manner thou art able, now whilst thou hast time before thee; lest otherwise thou be surprised and overtaken with the night, and mayest then wish in vain to have done penance, when time shall be no more.

On the Parable of the Sower. Luke viii. Being the Gospel of Sexagesima Sunday.

Feb. 10. **C**ONSIDER first, in this parable, the infinite riches of the goodness and bounty of the Son of God, who, without distinction, or respect of persons, sows so plentifully the seed of his word, and of his graces, on all kinds of soils. This seed is heavenly: it is capable of producing fruit a hundred fold: he himself is the sower; and he himself waters with rain from heaven the seed he has sown: and yet three parts in four of this divine seed

are lost, for want of a correspondence in the soil. Christians, see in what manner you receive the seed of God's word: see how you correspond with the divine graces and calls: your eternal salvation is here at stake. If you bring forth good fruit, agreeable to this divine seed, you shall live on it for endless ages, in the kingdom of heaven: but if you suffer the soil of your soul to be like a beaten highway; or like a rock, covered but with a thin surface of earth; or like a ground over-run with thorns and briars; the seed of God will be lost upon you; and you will be answerable for the loss of it, and miserable for all eternity.

Consider 2dly, what is here meant by the *highway*, where the seed is trodden under foot, or picked up by the birds: and see how justly all such souls are compared to a *highway*, or a beaten path, as live in the forgetfulness of God, and in a continual dissipation of thought; so as to become a mere thoroughfare for every passenger that pleases; that is, for every idle amusement that offers itself; for every impertinent or sinful imagination; without any fence at all of the fear of God, or any care to keep off those wicked spirits, signified by the birds, which are ever upon the watch to catch away this divine seed of God's word, that lies thus unregarded on the surface of the soul. But what is the remedy for this evil? No other, to be sure, than to plough up this ground that has hitherto been made a highway; to fence it in, in such a manner as that the passengers may have no longer liberty to be continually trampling it under foot; and to harrow it so that the seed may be covered by the earth, and lie no longer exposed to be a prey to the birds. For a highway, or beaten path, as long as it remains such, can never bring forth fruit. Now in the spiritual sense, we plough up the soil of the soul, by daily meditations upon eternal truths; we fence it in by a spirit of recollection; and we preserve the divine seed, which is to make it fruitful, from our spiritual enemies, by

letting it sink deep into our souls, and there guarding it by watching and prayer.

Consider 3dly, who they are that are meant by the *rock* or *stony ground*, where there is no depth of earth, nor proper moisture to nourish the seed, so as to bring the fruit to maturity: viz. such souls as receive indeed the word of God, and are moved by it to make some good resolutions, and some slender efforts towards bringing forth the fruits of a new life; but the *rock* of their old bad habits (which they have never heartily renounced), hinders the seed from taking root: their resolutions are but superficial; they do not sink in deep enough to reach, or change the heart; but, upon the first opposition or temptation, they wither away and die. The remedy here must be to procure that this rock may be softened, by the means of a long-continued application to mental prayer, and other spiritual exercises, till those old habits are brought to give way to the fear and love of God; which are capable even of breaking the rock in pieces, and of changing it into springs of water.

Conclude to be ever attentive to the gracious calls of the word of God, and of his heavenly inspirations: and to let this divine seed sink deep into thy soul by daily meditation.

On the remaining Part of the Parable of the Sower.

Feb. 11. **C**ONSIDER first, that there remains a third kind of soil, which brings no fruit to maturity, viz. the *thorny ground*; which receives indeed the seed of the divine word, but suffers it not to grow up, and to ripen, but overpowers it, and chokes it up with the thorns which are its natural produce, and which have taken a much stronger root therein. By which thorny ground are meant all they who hear the word of God, or are otherwise favoured with the visits of his graces and calls, but are so unhappy as to suffer all this heavenly seed to be overpowered, and choked up with their carnal af-

fections and lusts ; or, as our Saviour says, *with the cares and riches and pleasures of this life ; and so yield no fruit.* Luke viii. 14. O see, my soul, if this be not thy misfortune. Reflect how often thou hast been visited with graces from heaven : how often thou hast heard, or read the word of God : and what fruit has this divine seed produced in thee. It is well if, instead of the encrease of an hundred fold, it has not been rendered absolutely fruitless, if not pernicious to thee, by the thorns of thy disorderly affections to the things of this world, which thou hast loved more than God.

Consider 2dly, that *thorny ground* can never bring any fruit to perfection, except the thorns be first rooted up : for since they are much stronger than the corn, and have taken a deeper root in this unhappy soil (in consequence of the curse laid upon our earth by occasion of sin, Gen. iii. 17; 18.) as long as they are suffered to occupy the ground, they will of course overpower and choke up the good grain. Wherefore, if we desire to bring forth fruit, and that the seed of the word, and of the grace of God, should not be lost upon us, we must seriously apply our souls to the rooting out these thorns of our irregular affections to wordly toys and sensual pleasures : for as long as these are predominant in our souls, the seed of heaven will bring forth no fruit there. Now this rooting out of these thorns is the proper business of the virtue of self-denial ; that is, of the daily mortification of our passions and natural inclinations, which are ever prone to evil, and, if not kept under, hurry the soul into all kinds of vice, and stifle all the graces and inspirations of heaven. This then must be the care of every Christian, this our daily labour, to keep these thorns under, that they may not overpower the seeds of the word, and of the grace of God in our souls. And whatsoever we affect or love, to the prejudice of the love of God, or of our duty to him, we must look upon as thorns, and discharge from our souls, as mortal enemies to

the seed of heaven, and to our true welfare, either for time or eternity.

Consider 3dly, that the Christian must endeavour to be the good ground, in which the seed of God's word yieldeth fruit an hundred fold: that is, he must labour to be of the number of those, *who with a good and perfect heart hear the word, and keep it, and bring forth fruit in patience.* He must hear it with a *good heart*; not out of idle curiosity, but for his own instruction and edification; not to carp at it, or criticize upon it, but to let it sink into his soul, for the reformation of his life. He must hear it with a *perfect heart*, embracing it as the word and truth of God, brought to him from heaven by the Son of God, and designed to carry him to heaven. He must *keep it*, by laying it up carefully in his mind, and often meditating upon it: he must ever follow its light, and regulate all his steps by it. He must *bring forth fruit* with it, by exercising himself daily in those virtues which it recommends, and advancing continually, by its direction, in the love of God, and in the way of Christian perfection: and this fruit he must bring forth *in patience*; that is, with constancy and perseverance, notwithstanding all the difficulties and oppositions he will be sure to meet with from the world, the flesh, and the devil.

Conclude to rid thy soul of all the thorns that may hinder it from bringing forth fruit to God; that thou mayest be the good ground that may yield a hundred fold.

Against Delay of Repentance.

Feb. 12. **C**ONSIDER first, that of all the tricks of Satan, by which he deludes unhappy souls to their eternal ruin, there is none more common, or more dangerous, than this by which he persuades them to put off their repentance and conversion to God from time to time, till there is no more time for them. Alas! thousands and millions of poor souls have been thus betrayed, into that bot-

bottomless pit of never-ending woe, *where the worm never dies, and the fire is never extinguished*; who thought as little of damning themselves, or of dying in their sins, as any now living: but by putting off their conversion, they have gone on provoking the divine justice, till by a just judgment of God, they have been cut off when they least expected it; and dying as they lived, have been justly sentenced to that second and everlasting death. Unhappy wretches, who would not believe the just Judge who so often warned them *to watch*; and assured them that otherwise he should surprise them, like a thief in the night, when they least expected him. Ah! how dreadful and how common are these judgments!

Consider 2dly, the insupportable affront, that sinners offer to the Divine Majesty, when being invited and pressed by his heavenly graces to a reconciliation with their offended God, they put him off till another time; shutting their ears to his sweet calls, and refusing him the entrance of their hearts, where he stands and knocks. Alas! if he withdraws himself, they are undone for ever: and how dare they treat him with so much contempt? Is it not an infinite goodness in him, to have already suffered them so long in their sins; to have restrained the sword of his justice from falling upon their guilty heads; to have kept them so long out of hell, hanging as they were all the while over this bottomless pit, and supported only by a slender thread of a brittle life, which he held in his hand! Is it not an inexpressible condescension in his divine Majesty, after their repeated treasons, to allow them any conditions of peace and reconciliation at all? How much more to call after them, when they are running away from him, and to press them so earnestly to return to him; whereas he has no need at all of them, but only seeks their welfare? But what then ought they not to apprehend from his justice, if they still refuse his offers of mercy, and slight his graces

and calls? Can any punishment be too great for so much insolency, for so much obstinacy, and for so much ingratitude? O! let them give ear to his threats by the mouth of the wise man, Prov. i. *Because I have called, and you have refused to hear. I have stretched out my hand, and you would not regard me. You have despised all my counsels, and neglected my reprehensions. Therefore will I also laugh at your destruction, and will mock, when that which you feared shall come upon you. Then shall they call upon me, and I will not hear, &c.*

Consider 3dly, the monstrous presumption the sinner is guilty of, in wilfully persisting in sin, upon the confidence of a future conversion. Wretch that he is, how dares he pretend to dispose of the time to come, when he is not master of one moment of it? Or how has he the assurance to promise himself greater graces hereafter, than those he abuses at present? Does he not know that God alone is the master both of time and grace? and that he has neither promised the time nor grace of a true conversion hereafter, to any of those who put off their repentance at the present? So far from it, that he has often signified to such presumptuous sinners, that they shall neither have the time, nor the effectual grace which they promise themselves; but that they shall be surprised, and die in their sins. According to that of the wise man, Eccclus. v. 8, 9. *Delay not to be converted to the Lord, and defer it not from day to day; for his wrath shall come on a sudden, and in the time of vengeance he shall destroy thee.*

Conclude never to expose thy dear soul, by any delays, to the dreadful danger of dying in thy sins: but if at any time thou hast reason to apprehend thou hast lost the grace of God by sin, use thy best endeavours to be reconciled out of hand. It is a dreadful thing to be an enemy of God, though it were to be only for one night. That night may be thy last: therefore never venture to lie down to sleep under the guilt of mortal sin.

On the Folly of deferring our Conversion to God.

Feb. 13. **C**ONSIDER first, how foolish it is for the sinner, when called, when invited, and pressed, by the best of Fathers, to return to him; to choose rather to continue a slave to Satan, for to feed his swine; and to prefer the husks of swine, which can never satisfy him, before his Father's table, and the happy liberty of the children of God. Ah! poor wretch, open thy eyes, and see how strangely thou art deluded! Thy God proffers thee his mercy, his grace, his favour, the honour of being his child, his spouse, his temple, a share of his heavenly treasures; his peace, his comforts, his table, his kingdom, his Holy Spirit; in a word, himself, and all that is good: and thou art so blind, and so mad, as to desire him to keep all his favours for another time, and to make choice for thyself at present of the extremity of all misery; by choosing to go on yet a while under the dreadful guilt of mortal sin, a wretched slave to Satan, sin, and hell. Can any madness be comparable to this?

Consider 2dly, how vain and foolish are those pretexts, by which sinners suffer themselves to be imposed upon, when they defer their conversion to God: especially with regard to pretended difficulties in the undertaking, which would all presently be put to flight, and vanish away, if they would but once heartily set their hand to the work. But what is the most common delusion is, that they vainly imagine, they shall do it more easily another time. A dreadful delusion indeed! since both reason and daily experience must make it evident, that the longer this work is deferred, the harder it is to bring it about. And how should it be otherwise, since by these delays, and by continuing to add sin to sin, their sinful habits grow daily stronger upon them, and consequently harder to be rooted out; the devil's power over them daily increases; and God

Almighty, provoked by their repeated abuses of his graces, and their obstinate impenitence, withdraws himself further and further from them, and suffers them by-degrees to fall into that blindness and hardness of heart, which of all evils is the most difficult to be cured.

Consider 3dly, the folly of all such as put off their conversion to God, through the apprehension of the confession of their sins; and choose to suffer for a long time the gnawing worm of a guilty conscience, with all the other evils that always attend on mortal sin; and to be continually exposed to the danger of death and hell, and to all the judgments of an offended God, rather than to undergo a small confusion, that would last but one moment, and would immediately be followed with unspeakable comfort, and with a speedy pardon, reconciliation, peace, and grace. Would not all the world condemn that person of the greatest folly and madness, who labouring under a most painful and mortal distemper, should refuse an easy, safe, and sovereign remedy, only because it was disagreeable to the palate, just for the moment of the taking it: but O how much more unaccountable is the folly and madness of the sinner, who for fear of so small an humiliation, as the confession of his sins to a minister of God, tied by the laws, both of God and man, to an eternal secrecy, refuses all the medicines of heaven under a mortal disease, which is hurrying him on towards an eternal death; and chooses rather to risk his all, for eternity, than to discover his illness to his physician?

Conclude not to suffer the enemy to impose upon thee with any of his deceitful wiles, so as to induce thee to continue playing upon the brink of a precipice, with the sword of God hanging over thy head. No prudent person would refuse to be immediately reconciled to a man whom he had offended, who had the power and authority to condemn him to a cruel death for his offence: how much less should the sinner put off his reconciliation with an offended

God, who can in an instant cast both his body and soul into hell, and who is highly provoked by his impenitence.

On Death-Bed Performances.

Feb. 14. **C**ONSIDER first, that if it be so great an evil, to defer, for any considerable time, ones conversion to God, and ones reconciliation with him; it must be an evil incomparably greater, to form a premeditated design of putting it off to the end of our life, upon the confidence of a death-bed repentance: because the risk, the presumption, the madness, the outrage offered to God in this case is incomparably greater: so that it is well, if one in a thousand of them, that are guilty of such a formal design of putting a cheat upon the divine justice, (by indulging themselves in sin all their life-time, and then only thinking to make their peace with God, when they can sin no longer) ever meet with even the poor chance of a death-bed confession; much less with the grace of an effectual conversion. Oh! no: such sinners will find to their loss, that *God is not to be mocked*, Gal. vi. 7. The general rule is, that *what a man soweth, the same shall he reap*: and that as a man lives, so shall he die. A rule so general, that in the whole scripture we have but one instance of a happy death after a wicked life, viz. that of the good thief: an example so singular in all its circumstances, as to afford no kind of encouragement to such sinners, as design before-hand to give the slip to God's justice by a death-bed conversion.

Consider 2dly, how very little it is that the sinner is capable of doing on his death-bed, towards his conversion; when either the dulness and stupidity, caused by his sickness, or by the quality of the medicines; or the pains and agonies, which he endures in body or in mind, render him quite unfit for prayer, and incapable of attention to reading, or of any serious application of his thoughts to the great business of his soul. Alas! if a little head-ach, or any

other slight indisposition, be enough to hinder us at any time from making any serious meditation, or praying with devotion, how much less shall we be able to attend to prayer, or to do any thing else to the purpose, when we shall be surprised with a mortal illness, and with the pangs of death ! O Christians, let not yourselves then be imposed upon with vain imaginations of the fine acts of contrition, and of the love of God, that you will make upon your death-bed : they will all fly away from you then : it is well if you shall then be capable even of one good thought. Thousands that have flattered themselves with the thoughts of doing fine things upon their death-bed, have been prevented by sudden death ; thousands have been taken out of their senses, before they apprehended their danger : thousands have been flattered by those about them into a conceit that they were not dying, when they really were ; and which is the most common of all, thousands, in punishment of their forgetting God in their life-time, have been suffered to forget themselves in death : and thus generally speaking, these fine projects of death-bed performances turn to smoke, and end in hell.

Consider 3dly, that the conversion of an habitual sinner is at any time a very difficult task, and requires a strong grace, such as may reach, and change the heart, and effectually turn it from the affection of sin to the love of God : so as to make it hate above all evils, what has been for a long time turned into a second nature, by the force of an evil habit ; and to love and embrace with the whole soul, what has hitherto been loathed or despised. But if this task be very difficult at all times, and seldom brought to effect, without long and serious meditations, and much prayer : what a poor chance must there be for such sinners, as have on set purpose put off this work to the time, in which they are neither capable of meditation nor prayer ; and which is worst of all, when in punishment of their obstinate impenitence, and insupportable presumption, God

has withdrawn himself from them ? Alas ! poor sinner, thou flatteredst thyself in thy sins, that it would be easy for thee at any time (how late soever) to make thy peace with God, and to escape hell ; because thou hadst heard, that in whatsoever hour the sinner shall turn to God, he will shew him mercy : but then the devil hid from thy eyes, that this effectual turning to God, especially upon a death-bed, must be the fruit of an extraordinary grace of God, which he has promised to no man ; yea a very great miracle of grace, which he is seldom disposed to work in favour of such presumptuous wretches, as have made a practice all their life-time of mocking of him.

Conclude to have no dependence upon the death-bed performances of habitual sinners : no, not even though, like Antiochus, they should shed tears plentifully : these are often influenced by the fear of death, more than the love of God. Take thou care of one at least, by living always, for thy own part, as thou desirest to die : and exhort all that belong to thee, to secure their souls by this same method : it is the only safe way.

On the Dispositions with which we are to enter upon the Service of God. From Eccus. ii.

Feb. 15. **C**ONSIDER first, and diligently attend to those words of the wise man, *Eccus. ii. 1. Son, when thou comest to the service of God, stand in justice, and in fear, and prepare thy soul for temptation :* and learn from these prescriptions of the Holy Ghost, to enter upon the service of God with a strong resolution of not being discouraged with the opposition thou shalt meet with from the world, the flesh, and the devil ; and with a determination to stand thy ground in this spiritual warfare, like a valiant soldier ; putting on the armour of Christian justice, and of the fear of God : according to that of the apostle, *Eph. vi. 13, &c. Take unto you the armour of*

God, that you may be able to resist in the evil days, and to stand in all things perfect. Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth (that is, with sincerity in your intention towards God) and having on the breast-plate of justice (that is, of Christian virtue, with a full determination, at all events, to be true to your God) in all things taking the shield of faith, wherewith you may be able to extinguish all the fiery darts of the most wicked one : (by a lively sense of God and eternity) and take unto you the helmet of salvation, (that is, an humble confidence in God;) and the sword of the spirit, which is the word of God, viz. by frequent hearing, reading, or meditating on divine truths. And being thus prepared for the fight, you will not fail of gaining the victory.

Consider 2dly, what the wise man further prescribes to all that desire to succeed in this glorious enterprise ; which is, to bring us to God, and to eternal life. *Humble thy heart, says he, and endure ; (that is, suppress, and keep under, all irregular risings of thy pride and passion, that shall offer to oppose thy undertaking :) wait on God with patience ; join thyself to God and endure, that thy life may be encreased in the latter end. Take all that shall be brought upon thee ; and in thy sorrow endure, and in thy humiliation keep patience. For gold and silver are tried in the fire, but acceptable men in the furnace of humiliation.* Excellent lessons, not only for beginners, but for all that are on their journey towards heaven ! for crosses, sufferings, and humiliations, are the portion of all the servants of God ; and patience and courage in adversities, humbling ourselves under the hand of God, and a perfect resignation to his holy will, serve to qualify all our afflictions, and to make them light and easy, as well as infinitely advantageous to our souls. O how happy are they who have learnt what it is to *join themselves to God*, in all they have to suffer ! O what a happiness is to be found in enduring in his company, and with an en-

tire conformity to his blessed will. What an increase will this give to *our life in the latter end*, by adding to it a happy eternity!

Consider 3dly, that one of the most excellent dispositions for attaining to all good, and the most effectual means to begin well, to advance daily, and to continue to the end in the happy service of God, is to conceive, and to nourish in the soul, a great esteem for a virtuous and devout life, an earnest desire of being good, a hunger and thirst after Christian justice; in a word, an ardent love for true wisdom, which indeed is no other than the knowledge, love, and service of God. *I wished*, says the wise man, *Wisdom vii. 7. and understanding was given me, and I called, and the spirit of wisdom came upon me; and I preferred her before kingdoms and thrones, and esteemed riches nothing in comparison with her.—— I loved her above health and beauty, and all good things came to me together with her, and innumerable riches through her hands.—— For she is an infinite treasure to men, which they that use become the friends of God.* O how glorious are the things that are said, both here, and in many other passages of the divine oracles, of this heavenly wisdom! O how lovely, how desirable is this treasure, this precious pearl of virtue and devotion, which is the truest wisdom: who would not give all things else to purchase such an inestimable jewel? But behold the wisest of men, yea, the Spirit of God by him, assures us, that we need but desire it, seek it, and love it with all our hearts, and it shall be our own.

Conclude to observe all these heavenly lessons, and they will not fail to bring thee to God. He earnestly desires to make thee happy, by making thee his true servant: if thou desirest the same, how caust thou miscarry; provided thy desire be fervent and perseverant?

On true Devotion.

Feb. 16. **C**ONSIDER first, that a *devout life* is indeed the most happy of lives, and the most secure way to an eternal life. For *true devotion* is the very perfection of charity and love; she is the queen of virtues. But beware, O my soul, of the error of such *false devotees*, as make all devotion consist in certain external exercises, destitute of the internal spirit; or in huddling over a number of prayers, or in frequent fastings, disciplines, or hair shirts; or in giving alms; or in frequenting the sacraments; or in following some other religious practices, which happen to be agreeable to their inclinations, though they remain all the while unmortified in their passions, full of self-love, and void of all true charity, either to God or to their neighbour; whereas true devotion cannot be without keeping of all the commandments, but more especially those two, of loving God above all things, and our neighbour as ourselves.

Consider 2dly, that to be *truly devout*, is to give ones self truly to God, according to the original meaning of the word *devotion*, which signifies a dedication and consecration of ones self to God. So that true devotion consists in always seeking God, and tending to him, in embracing in all things his holy will, and ever loving and obeying his holy law. He that does this, is truly devout: but he that does not love the will of God better than his own humour, is not devout, although he prays all day long, and sheds floods of tears. Consequently, he that is a slave to any of his passions, he that entertains a rancour to any one of his neighbours, he that sets his heart upon the world and its toys, more than God, can never be truly devout, because he wants the very foundation of true devotion, which is loving God above all things. As to those other things mentioned above, they are often the attendants of true devotion, or its effects; but then devotion does not

consist in any of them; and they may often be found in such as have no true devotion, no true charity, nor even true faith, *without which no one can please God*, Heb. xi.

Consider 3dly, that true devotion is not always sensible, nor does it consist in certain sensible tendernesses, which some people experience in prayer; whilst others, who perhaps in the sight of God are much better Christians, meet with nothing for a long time but dryness and desolation. Some persons are of a more soft and tender nature, and are easily affected even unto tears, and yet withal are very superficial in the love of God; quickly forget their good resolutions of serving him; easily yield in the time of temptation; shrink under every cross; and never arrive at solid virtue: and where is their *devotion* all this while, since it dries up, like their tears, in a moment, and brings forth no fruit? How much more *devout* is that Christian, who continues constant in prayer, though he finds no sensible comfort therein; who goes not to prayer to seek his own pleasure, but to please his God, and to glorify him; who is willing to take up the cross, and to help his Saviour in the carriage of his cross, by bearing, for the love of him, the dryness and desolation that he endures, without leaving his accustomed exercises: in a word, whose prayer is a conformity of his own will to the will of God. O this is devotion indeed: but sensible consolations, without this conformity, deserve not the name of devotion.

Conclude to make no account of any feeling of devotion, that is not accompanied with charity, humility, and conformity to the will of God; and thou wilt be sure not to be imposed upon, as great numbers have been, by false appearances, and phantoms of devotion, to the danger of the loss of their precious souls.

On the Opposition there is between the World and the Gospel. For Shrove-Tide.

Feb. 17. **C**ONSIDER first, that it is not for nothing that the Son of God in the *Gospel* so often declares against the *world*, as a capital enemy of him and his : because light and darkness are not more opposite than the *world* and the *gospel*. The maxims and practices of the one are quite contradictory to the other. The world perpetually recommends what the gospel condemns, and condemns what the gospel recommends. The world is made up of pride, ambition, and vain-glory ; the gospel breathes nothing but humility, self-contempt, choosing the lowest place, and becoming as little children : assuring us that otherwise there is no heaven for us. The world inspires a covetous spirit, the love of mammon, and a fondness for worldly toys : the gospel inculcates the necessity of despising all these things, and of quitting all things, at least in affection, to follow Christ. The world is a slave to sensual pleasures, and places its whole happiness in gratifying and indulging its own humours and inclinations : the gospel requires, as the very first and most necessary condition to be a disciple of Christ, that we should deny ourselves, hate our own humours and inclinations, and take up our cross and follow him. The world imagines them blessed, that abound the most with worldly honours, riches, delicacies, pastimes, and other worldly enjoyments, and have none to thwart or contradict them. The gospel, on the contrary, pronounces them blessed that are poor in this world, that suffer injuries and affronts with meekness, that weep and mourn, and that are reviled and persecuted by men. In a word, the life of worldlings is a perpetual contradiction to the gospel of Christ. And the life of Christ, and of all the true children of the gospel, is a perpetual censure of the world and its maxims. See, my soul, which thou hadst rather follow, the world

or the gospel; the broad way, or the narrow; the way of perdition, or the way of life.

Consider 2dly, that Christianity never had a more dangerous enemy than the world, and never yet suffered half so much from all the persecutions of infidels, that have been from the beginning, as it continually suffers from these false brethren, who, under the Christian name, are perpetually undermining the gospel of Christ, and promoting the kingdom of Satan. The persecutions of infidels made innumerable saints, and served very much to purify and to propagate the church and kingdom of Christ: whereas, this war that is continually carried on by wicked Christians against the morals and maxims of the gospel, draws away innumerable souls from Christ, corrupts the innocence even of the best inclined, and enslaves them to Satan and sin, and condemns them to hell. O let us beware of this mortal enemy of our salvation, this torrent of worldly custom, these pernicious maxims of a deluded and deluding world.

Consider 3dly, with relation to this very time of *Shrove-Tide*, how wide a distance there is between the true spirit of Christianity, and the practice of the children of this world. The church sets aside this time for a time of devotion and penance, that it may be a suitable preparation for a solemn fast of Lent; therefore she puts on at this time her penitential attire; she calls upon her children to enter into a penitential disposition; to renounce now their evil ways, and to confess their sins; that, by removing these rubs out of the way, they may be properly prepared for meeting with mercy and grace, at this approaching time of mercy and grace. The very name of *Shrove-tide*, in the ancient English, signifies *the time of confession of sins*, because our Catholic ancestors were taught to turn to God, at this time, with their whole hearts, by humble confession and penance: But O how sadly has the spirit of the world perverted this pious institution, and turned this time of devotion and penance into a time of riot

and sin; even of such excesses and extravagances, as would much better suit with the heathenish festivals of Bacchus, than with any Christian solemnity, much less with a preparation for a penitential fast. Beware thou, my soul, of conforming thyself to the world in any of its extravagances at this time, lest by joining now with this enemy of God, and of thy salvation, thou come to lose both thyself, and thy God, for all eternity.

Conclude to give ear to the divine oracles. *Love not the world, nor the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him, 1 John ii. 13. The friendship of this world is the enemy of God: whosoever therefore will be a friend of this world, becometh an enemy of God, James iv. 4.* And since the word of God thus expressly declares, that there can be no such thing as being a friend both to God and the world, keep off from the love of the world, and from its maxims and customs, lest thou make God thy enemy.

On Fighting under the Standard of Jesus Christ.

Feb. 18. **C**ONSIDER first, that there are upon earth, and have been all along, two opposite kingdoms, two opposite cities, Jerusalem and Babylon, the city of God, and the city of the devil; two opposite standards, that of Jesus Christ, and that of Satan. From the time that man unhappily fell from God by sin, Satan set up his tyrannical usurpation; which he has, by all kind of tricks and lies, endeavoured to maintain ever since; by alluring poor deluded mortals with the glittering shew of worldly pomps, riches, and pleasures, to become his slaves, and to fight under his standard; and by establishing among them his laws and maxims, calculated for nothing else but to make them miserable, both for time and eternity. And ah! how unhappily has he prevailed over millions! what multitudes every where join with him against their God! how is this wretched Babylon spread over all the earth!

Consider 2dly, that Jesus Christ came into this world to set up his standard in opposition to the standard of Satan, and to invite all men to follow him; promising to deliver his followers from all their evils, and to impart to them all his good. They that duly correspond with his call, and join his royal standard, make up the city of God, the blessed Jerusalem, the church of the Saints. But see now the immense difference between these two opposite cities and their inhabitants; how happy the one, and how miserable the other. The children of Babylon are miserable indeed; they are slaves to passions that can never be satisfied; to a world that can never be contented; to infernal tyrants that are continually dragging them along with them towards hell: they are slaves to empty vanities, childish toys, and lying follies; labouring under a variety of fears, cares, sorrows, uneasinesses, and innumerable other evils, without enjoying so much as any one solid or lasting satisfaction. But O how happy are the children of Jerusalem! what content, what peace, what pure pleasure in the soul, are commonly their portion, even in this life, and immortal joys in the next! and shalt thou, my soul, stand one moment to deliberate which of the two thou shalt choose; the standard of Christ, or that of Satan; Jerusalem or Babylon; all good, or all evil; verity or vanity; happiness or misery; heaven or hell?

Consider 3dly, that all manner of motives, from time and eternity, from our origin and last end, from duty and interest, honour and pleasure, fear and love, all here concur to determine the soul in her choice, and to fix her in the happy resolution of following the standard of Jesus Christ. Turn then, my soul, turn away from this *Babel* of confusion, noise, and disorder: break her chains from off thy neck, O captive daughter of Sion. Renounce for good and all, the king of pride; the tyrant that has usurped to himself the dominion over this world, and its deluded admirers: renounce his works and pomps, together

with all his associates, the princes of darkness, and all their slaves; and turn thyself to the blessed Jerusalem, the city of peace: embrace the king of peace, and his glorious standard, with all thy heart; choose him for thy king for ever; pay him irrevocable homage; and promise him inviolable fidelity and obedience.

Conclude, since thou hast now chosen Jesus Christ to be thy king, to fight manfully unto death, under his royal standard of the cross, against his and thy enemies, the world, the flesh, and the devil. In order to this, learn well thy exercise of prayer, and the rules of the gospel, which are the military discipline which he has fixed for his soldiers.

On the Rules prescribed by Jesus Christ to his Followers.

Feb. 19. **C**ONSIDER first, the laws of the military discipline which Jesus Christ prescribes to all that desire to be his soldiers, *Matt. xvi. 24. If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.* The observance of these three articles makes a complete soldier of Christ. We must renounce ourselves; we must bear our crosses; and we must walk in the footsteps of Jesus Christ. The corruption of man by sin; the wounds that sin has left in all the faculties of the soul; the violence of our disorderly passions; and the bent of our natural inclinations to evil, infer a necessity of renouncing ourselves, of fighting against ourselves, and of hating our natural inclinations, if we hope to be happy either here or hereafter. We have not a more dangerous enemy than ourselves; the devil himself cannot hurt us half so much as we hurt ourselves, when we follow our own will, and indulge our own inclinations. *The denying, therefore, of ourselves,* is the first article of the discipline of Jesus Christ, in opposition to our unhappy self-love, the root of all our evils, and its three principal branches, *the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life.* The Son of God came

down from heaven, to engage us in this holy warfare. The humility, the poverty, the voluntary sufferings of his birth, of his life, and of his death, were all levelled against these enemies.

Consider 2dly, that the soldier of Jesus Christ must stand to his colours; he must not run from the cross: he must bear and forbear; he must endure many conflicts; he must patiently submit to, and courageously go through, the labours and hardships of this short campaign of his mortal life. He must not pretend to fare better than his captain and his king. All sufferings and hardships appear as nothing to a brave soldier, when he is following his prince, and is happy in his company. The Christian soldier then must be willing to carry his cross after Jesus Christ, who opened heaven to us by the cross, and conducts his soldiers thither by the way of the cross. Embrace then, O my soul, this happy instrument of thy salvation, in which, if thou bearest it in a proper manner, thou wilt find an inexhaustible source of grace and comfort. Embrace the holy will of God, which lays the cross upon thee, to bring thee to himself. He knows what is best for thee, because he is infinitely wise, and he sends thee what he knows is for the best, because he is infinitely good, and good to thee. Thou canst not be in a safer or better way than in the way of the cross, by which Jesus Christ and all his Saints have gone to heaven. Even in this life, the true soldiers of Christ find often a greater sweetness in the cross, than in all the pleasures of this world.

Consider 3dly, that the soldiers of Christ are all called, even as his first disciples were, to *follow him*; that is, to walk in his footsteps, by an imitation of his life. He came down from heaven to be our teacher, and our model; and it is the great duty of all that desire to belong to him, to copy after his blessed original, and to shew forth in themselves the life of Jesus Christ: *To learn of him to be meek and humble of heart*: to learn of him poverty of spirit, a

contempt of the honours, riches, and pleasures of this world, and a disengagement of the heart from all earthly things: to learn of him a horror for sin, and an obedience even unto death: in fine, to learn of him a perpetual conformity to the will of God, and an unbounded charity to every neighbour. Such was the life of Jesus Christ, and such ought to be the life of all his soldiers.

Conclude to embrace henceforward this discipline of Jesus Christ, in all its parts. It is a *heavenly* discipline indeed, since he came down from *heaven* to teach it, and the observance of it is to bring us to *heaven*.

N. B. That as Lent sometimes begins before the twentieth of February, sometimes after; when it begins before, the meditations that are not read at this time are to be read in June, after the octave of *Corpus Christi*: as on the other hand, when Lent begins later than the twentieth of February, the meditations that shall be wanting here, are to be taken out of the number of those that are placed in the month of June after the aforesaid octave.

Here follow Meditations for the Feasts of St. Matthias, St. Joseph, and the Annunciation of the Blessed Virgin, which commonly fall in Lent.

On the Gospel of the Feast of St. Matthias.

Feb. 24. **C**ONSIDER first, how our Lord, *re-joining in the Holy Ghost, Matt. xi. 25, &c.* addressed himself to his heavenly Father in these words: *I give thanks to thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things (the great truths of the Gospel) from the wise and prudent (of this world), and hast revealed them to little ones.* And learn thou, my soul, to admire and adore in this the wonderful ways of the wisdom of God, who ever resists the proud, and gives his grace to the humble; and therefore withdraws and hides himself, and his truths, from such as are puffed up

with the conceit of their own wit or learning, or any other talents, whether natural or acquired; whilst he discovers his secrets to the little or humble; fills their souls with his heavenly light, and works his greatest wonders in them, and by them. Thus he did with regard to his Apostles: and thus we shall generally find, that the humble and simple have been instruments in the hand of God, of all the great works he has wrought in the conversion and sanctification of souls. O blessed be his name for ever, who thus delights in showing his power in weak vessels; and chooses the contemptible things of this world to confound our pride! O teach me, dear Lord, to be ever little and humble.

Consider 2dly, how sweetly our Lord, on the same occasion, invites us to himself; saying, *Come to me, all you that labour, and are heavy laden, and I will refresh you.* Alas! we all labour in this vale of tears. 'The days of this world are short and evil, full of sorrows and miseries; where man is defiled with many sins, ensnared with many passions, assaulted with many fears, disquieted with many cares, dissipated with many curiosities, entangled with many vanities, surrounded with many errors, broken with many hardships and fatigues, troubled with many temptations.' *Kempis.* And is not this labouring and being heavy laden? Yes, there is a heavy yoke, indeed, upon the children of Adam, from their coming out of their mother's womb, until the day of their burial into the mother of all. *Ecclus. lxi. 1.* But what remedy then for all these evils? We must run to Christ, and he will refresh us; he will comfort and relieve us. *We must take up his yoke upon us,* and he will rescue us from the slavery of sin and Satan; he will qualify all our other labours and miseries; he will give us the victory over all our passions and temptations; *and we shall find rest to our souls: for his yoke is sweet, and his burthen light.*

Consider 3dly, that our Lord here invites us also to learn of him, to take him for our master, and to

become his scholars. A great honour indeed, to have the Son of God come down from heaven to be our teacher ! But what then are we to learn of so great a master ? Are we to learn of him to make heaven and earth ; or to rule and govern the whole universe ? or are we to learn of him to work all kind of miracles, and to raise the dead to life ? O no : but we are to learn of him to be *meek and humble of heart*. This is the great lesson the king of heaven came down to teach us. In learning this, we shall find a remedy for all our evils. No one but he could effectually teach us this lesson. Could we even raise the dead to life, it would be all nothing, without *learning to be meek and humble of heart*, and overcoming passion and pride.

Conclude, O my soul, to comply henceforward with this sweet summons and invitation of thy dear Lord, and to run to him, and put thyself in his service : that, with his gracious assistance, thou mayest cast off from thy shoulders the heavy yoke of the world, the flesh, and the devil ; and take up his light yoke, and rest in him for ever.

On St. JOSEPH.

March 19. **C**ONSIDER first, the testimony that the Holy Ghost has given to the virtue and sanctity of St. Joseph, in telling us in the gospel that he was a *just man*. And doubtless the Almighty would never have made choice of any man to be the chaste bridegroom of the purest of virgins, and the foster-father and guardian of his own divine Son, that was not consummate in purity and sanctity. Learn from hence, Christian souls, what kind of qualifications will make you also agreeable to Jesus and Mary : you will certainly drive them far away from you by criminal impurity. Admire the command St. Joseph had of his passions, in his joining perfect continency with the state of marriage ; and in the evenness of soul, which he preserved under all events, how adverse soever : and learn of him to

keep thy passions under subjection, and cheerfully to submit thy will in all occasions to the appointments of heaven.

Consider 2dly, the great examples St. Joseph has given us of all other virtues: his lively faith, in a ready submission of his soul to the belief of the most difficult mysteries, relating to the incarnation of the Son of God: his ardent love of his dearest Jesus: his concern and tender care for him in his infancy and childhood; and his wonderful diligence in all that belonged to his charge: his meekness and charity to the Blessed Virgin, when, to his unspeakable surprise, he found her with child: his ready obedience, without demur or reply, to every intimation of the will of heaven, whatsoever hardships or labours it might put him to, as in the case of his flight into Egypt: his patience under afflictions and persecutions: his humble submission, notwithstanding his royal extraction, to the toil and labour of a handicraft, to gain a poor livelihood for himself, and for Jesus and Mary, with the sweat of his brow: together with an amiable simplicity in his whole comportment, and a perpetual attention to God, by divine contemplation. Christians, let us imitate his virtues, whatsoever our station of life may be: we see by his example, that perfect sanctity may be found even in the midst of the distractions of a worldly calling; and that if we are not saints, it is not the fault of our calling, but of our not corresponding with divine grace. St. Joseph found a great advantage to his soul from his having Jesus always in his company, and working with him: O let us also take care to have Jesus always with us (wherever we are, or whatever we are doing), by a spirit of recollection, and a constant attention to him; and never to drive him away by any sinful conversation; or by entertaining his enemies in our interior; and we shall quickly be sensible of the fruits his presence will bring to our souls.

Consider 3dly, and learn from the example of

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Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, how great an error the world lies under, when it flies with so much eagerness from poverty and labour, as conceiving them to be great evils; which the wisdom of God made choice of for himself, for his blessed mother, and reputed father: and which they have consecrated by their life and practice. And for thy part, my soul, have another way of thinking; and if thy condition be that of the rich, be not puffed up with it; but rather humble thyself to see thou art so unlike to that blessed family, and fear the many dangers that riches are exposed to: despise not the poor, but ever honour and succour them, as the relations of Christ, or as Christ himself; thou hast his authority for doing so. If thou art poor, remember thou wearest the livery of Christ, and of his Family: comfort thyself in the resemblance thou bearest with them: and take care lest, by thy murmuring or impatience, thou lose any of the advantages which thy state entitles thee to. If thou followest any trade or handicraft, take St. Joseph for thy patron, and for thy pattern. Thou seest, by his example, that sanctity is not inconsistent with thy business. But then take heed, lest by any fraud, or injustice, or by an excessive solicitude for the things of this world, to the neglect of thy soul, thou banish Jesus from thy shop or house. Be sure to make him the companion of all thy labour; offer up all thou dost to him; and often entertain thyself with him. If God has blessed thee with children, take care, by an early diligence, to form Christ in them, by constantly instilling into their tender minds the fear and love of God, and the horror of sin: thus thou mayest, like St. Joseph, bring up Jesus in these little ones.

Conclude to honour St. Joseph by an imitation of his virtues: and in order to this, implore the assistance of his prayers. His interest is great with our Lord; as St. Teresa declares she frequently experienced. Beg in particular his intercession for the obtaining of a happy death. St. Joseph was happy

in death, by having our Lord and the Blessed Virgin to attend and assist him. Let us, like him, keep ever close to them in life, and they will be with us in death.

On the Annunciation of the Blessed Virgin.

March 25. **C**ONSIDER first, how the *Angel Gabriel* (Luke i. 26, &c.) was sent from God into a city of Galilee called Nazareth, to a Virgin, espoused to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the Virgin's name was Mary. And the Angel being come in, said to her, Hail full of grace, the Lord is with thee; blessed art thou among women. And when she had heard, she was troubled at his saying, and thought with herself what manner of salutation this should be. And the Angel said to her: Fear not, Mary, for thou hast found grace with God. Behold thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and shalt bring forth a Son, and thou shalt call his name Jesus. He shall be great and shall be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of David his father; and he shall reign in the house of Jacob for ever, and of his kingdom there shall be no end. Christians, give attention to this most sacred and most solemn embassy, sent from the king of heaven; not to any of the great ones, or potentates of this world, but to a poor and humble maid: to treat with her upon the highest matters; even upon the great business of the Incarnation of the Son of God, the establishment of his everlasting kingdom, and the redemption and salvation of man. Admire and adore the depth of the wisdom of the ways of God (so much exalted above the maxims and ways of the worldly wise), by which he is pleased to bring about such great things, without noise or pomp, in so humble a manner, and by such humble instruments. And give thanks for that infinite goodness and love for us, which he has shewn in the mystery of this day.

Consider 2dly, the great lessons the Blessed Virgin

teaches us, by her whole comportment on this occasion. She is favoured with an embassy from God; she is greeted by one of the highest of the Angels, as *full of divine grace*: she is told that *the Lord is with her*, and that *she is blessed among all women*: and instead of being puffed up with these high favours, or taking any vain complacency in these titles and encomiums, she is troubled at the words of the Angel, and, through the humble sentiments she has of herself, wonders what should be the meaning of such a salutation. She is assured by the Angel that *she has found grace with God*; and is chosen by him to conceive and bear the Saviour of the world, even the Son of the Most High: and so great is her love for virginal purity, that she is ready to forego the dignity of *Mother of God*, rather than part with her virginity. *How shall this be done*, saith she, *because I know not man?* As being consecrated by vow to God; and determined to keep my vow. The Angel informs her, that she shall conceive by the Holy Ghost, and be overshadowed by the power of the Most High, so as still to remain a pure maid. And then with a most profound humility, and a most perfect oblation of herself to God, and an entire conformity to his blessed will, she cries out: *Behold the handmaid of the Lord, be it done to me according to thy word*. Let us study well, and learn of her the practice of these great lessons, of humility, love of purity, and perfect resignation of ourselves to the will of God.

Consider 3dly, how as soon as the blessed Virgin had thus given her consent, she immediately conceived by the Holy Ghost; who, by his almighty power, formed a body out of her purest blood, and created an immortal soul for that body: and this body and soul were in that instant assumed, and united to the eternal Word, the Son of God, the second person of the adorable Trinity. And thus, was celebrated in the Virgin's womb the sacred wedding of our human nature with the divine person of the Son of God,

to the feast of which we are all invited, Matt. xxii. Thus *the Word was made flesh and dwelt amongst us*, St. John i. This great mystery of the incarnation of the Son of God is the original source of all our good: in making God man, it has made man God. The Son of God by taking upon him our humanity, makes us partakers of his divinity. He comes to be our Saviour and our Redeemer, to deliver us from all evils: he comes to be our advocate, and our physician: he comes to be our father, and our friend: he comes to be our king, and our priest, and *to make us kings and priests unto his Father*. He stoops down to our dust, to raise us up from the dust, and to bring us to *sit down with him in his throne*. Apoc. iii. 21. See then, my soul, in what manner thou oughtest to celebrate this great festival of the conception of the Son of God? What homage and adoration, what praise and thanksgiving thou owest him for these wonders he has wrought in thy favour; what return of love for his love to thee? O welcome him at least to the best of thy power; and since he comes to dwell amongst us, beg he would accept of the lodging of thy heart.

Conclude to keep for ever in thy soul a faithful, grateful, and loving remembrance of the mystery of the incarnation of the Son of God; and a sincere affection for his Virgin Mother: and with these dispositions, frequently in the day repeat the angelical salutation; more especially at the regular hours of the morning, noon, and night.

On Ash-Wednesday.

CONSIDER first, how God calls upon us, by his prophet, in the lesson of this day. *Be converted to me*, saith he, *with all your heart, in fasting, and in weeping, and in mourning: and rend your hearts, and not your garments, and turn to the Lord your God*. Joel ii. 12, 13. Christians, hearken to this summons from heaven. O let it sink deep into your souls; and if this day you hear the voice of God,

sweetly inviting you to return to him in good earnest, now at this holy season, harden not your hearts; lest provoked by your impenitence, he turn away from you, and you die in your sins. O let us repent and amend, as we are admonished by the church this day, whilst we have time; lest being overtaken by death, which is ever following at our heels, we should seek for time of penance, and not be able to find it.

Consider 2dly, the meaning of the ashes which are put on our heads this day with these words: *Remember man that thou art dust: and into dust shalt thou return.* Sackcloth and ashes were the ancient habit of penitents. The Ninivites by fasting in sackcloth and ashes found mercy. Let these ashes then, which we receive on our heads, at the beginning of this penitential fast, be a lesson to us, to enter upon it with the like penitential spirit. They are an emblem of contrition and humility: let us receive them with a contrite and humble heart. They are also a remembrance of our mortality; of our frail composition, and of our hasty return to our mother earth. O let us think well on this; and renounce henceforward our unhappy pride and presumption: O let us make good use of this our time, and prepare for that moment, which shall, ere long, send away our souls into another region, and turn our bodies into dirt and dust.

Consider 3dly, Christian soul, those words as if they were addressed to thee, *yet forty days, and Ninive shall be destroyed.* Jonas iii. 4. Alas! have not thy sins, like those of Ninive, called to heaven this long time for vengeance? And hast thou not too much reason to fear, lest the mercy, which thou hast so long abused, should now quickly give place to justice, and should suffer thee to die in thy sins. Perhaps this is the last reprieve that God will grant thee. In all appearance the good use or the abuse of these forty days may determine thy lot for an eternity.

Conclude then to spare no pains to avert the judgment that hangs over thy head; and to spend these forty days of reprieve in suing for mercy, after the manner God has appointed, that is, by fasting, weeping, and mourning, that thou mayest effectually find it.

Thursday after Ash-Wednesday.
On Fasting.

CONSIDER first, how much *fasting* is recommended to us in the word of God, by the great example of Christ, and of his Saints, as well of the old as of the new Testament; how we are there called upon to turn to God, with *fasting*. Joel ii. How the greatest sinners have there found mercy by *fasting*. Jonas iii. How we are there taught that all Christ's children are to *fast* during his absence from us, *St. Matt.* ix. 15. and that the devil is not to be cast out but by prayer and *fasting*. *St. Mark* ix. 28. Man fell from God originally by intemperance; he returns to him by *fasting*. The gratifying our sensual appetite betrays us both to the flesh and to the devil: we overcome them both by *fasting*: by which (as the church daily inculcates in the preface for Lent) God restrains our vices and passions, elevates our souls to himself, and bestows upon us his heavenly gifts and graces. O happy fasting which drivest away all our evils, healest both soul and body; and bringest us to our sovereign good!

Consider 2dly, that there are three great advantages found in fasting. First it appeases the wrath of God, provoked by our sins; inasmuch as by fasting for them, we acknowledge our guilt: and take part with his justice, in condemning and punishing ourselves. For there is nothing sooner moves God to shew us mercy, than the homage we pay to his justice, by exercising a wholesome severity against the wretch that has dared to offend God. O let us conceive a just indignation against this sinful flesh! Let us not spare the traitor that has so often betrayed

us into sin ! Let a penitential fast be our regular exercise.

Consider 3dly, that another great advantage of *fasting* is, that we are enabled by it to overcome our passions and concupiscences. Fasting, when performed with a due spirit, humbles the soul exceedingly, and consequently restrains the irregular motions of all the passions that are the daughters of pride. It keeps the flesh in subjection by depriving it of the principal nourishment of its rebellions and disorders; and obliges it to submit to the spirit. And which is a third advantage, in proportion to its weakening the passions of the flesh, it gives strength and vigour to the soul; sets it at liberty from the clogs that hinder its free application to heavenly truths; and enables it to fly upwards towards God, by purer prayer and contemplation.

Conclude to set a due value on this wholesome exercise, which has been the favourite of all the Saints; and has greatly contributed to make them the favourites of heaven. But take care that your fasting be accompanied with its proper attendants, that it may be such a fast as God has chosen.

Friday after Ash-Wednesday.

On the Rules of Fasting.

CONSIDER first, that fasting, according to the present discipline of the church, implies three things. First we are to abstain from flesh meat on fasting days: secondly we are to eat but one meal in the day: and thirdly we are not to take our meal till about noon. The ancient discipline of the church was more rigorous, both in the point of the abstinence, and in not allowing the meal in Lent till the evening. These regulations are calculated to mortify the sensual appetite, by penance and self-denial. If you find some difficulty in the observance of them, offer it up to God for your sins. Fasting is not designed to please, but to punish. Your diligent compliance on this occasion with the laws of your

mother the church, will also give an additional value to your mortification, from the virtue of obedience.

Consider 2dly, that we must not content ourselves with the outward observance of these regulations, that relate to our diet, on fasting days : but we must principally have regard to the inward spirit, and what we may call the very soul of the fast; which is a penitential spirit. Without this the outward observance is but like a carcase without life. This penitential spirit implies a deep sense of the guilt of our sins; a horror and detestation of all our past disloyalties and treasons, and a hearty sorrow for them; a sincere desire to return to God, and to renounce our sinful ways for the future; and particularly a readiness of mind to make the best satisfaction we are capable of to divine justice, by penancing ourselves for our sins. Fasting, performed in this spirit, cannot fail of moving God to mercy. O, my soul, let thy fasting be always animated with this spirit !

Consider 3dly, that fervent *prayer*, and *alms-deeds* also, according to each one's ability, ought to be the inseparable companions of our *fasting*. These three sisters should go hand in hand, (*Tob. xii. 8.*) to help us in our warfare against our three mortal enemies, the flesh, the world, and the devil. The practice of these three eminent good works we must oppose to that triple concupiscence, which reigns in the world, and by means of which Satan maintains his unhappy reign. By fasting we overcome the lust of the flesh: by alms-deeds we subdue the lust of the eyes, by which we are apt to covet the mammon of the world, and its empty toys: and by fervent and humble prayer we conquer the pride of life, and put to flight the devil, the king of pride. O let us never forget to call in these powerful auxiliaries to help us in our warfare. Let alms deeds and prayer ever accompany our fasts.

Conclude to follow these rules, if you desire your

fast should be acceptable: if you fail in them, it will not be such a fast as God hath chosen.

Saturday after Ash-Wednesday.

On the great Fast of a Christian.

CONSIDER first, that the great and general fast of a Christian is to abstain from sin. This fast obliges all sorts of persons, young and old, sick and healthy, at all times, and in all places. To pretend to fast, and yet to go on in wilful sin, is a mockery, rather than a fast. What were the Pharisees the better for their fasting, while their souls were corrupted with pride, covetousness, malice, and hypocrisy. Did not God reject the fast of the Jews (*Isaias lvi.*), because on the days of their fasting they continued to provoke him by their customary sins? And will he be better pleased with us, if we, in pretending to fast, are guilty of the like disorders? No, certainly. If then we would fast to the purpose, *let the wicked man forsake his way, and the unjust man his thoughts, and let him return to the Lord, and then he will have mercy on him.*

Consider 2dly; that the true Christian fast should not only put a restraint upon the sensual appetite, in point of eating; but also extend itself to a more general mortification of every one of the senses and faculties; in, and by which, we have been liable to intemperance or excess. The eyes, the ears, the tongue, and so of all the rest, ought likewise to fast, from curiosity, sensuality, vanity, carnal pleasures, idle conversation, theatrical shews, and other worldly and sensual diversions, unbecoming a serious Christian penitent at all times, but much more on days of fasting. But especially we are warned, *Isai. lvi. 3.* on the days of our fasting, to fast from our own will, humour, and passion, as that, which of all things is the most opposite to the fast which God hath chosen. O, my soul, see thou take good notice of this lesson: beware, lest thou break thy fast by indulging self-will, pride, and passion.

Consider 3dly, and weigh well the description given by the prophet Isaias (chap. lviii.), of the fast that is acceptable to the Lord, and of its happy effects in the soul. *Is not this (saith the Lord) the fast that I have chosen? Loose the bands of wickedness—and break asunder every burden. Deal thy bread to the hungry, and bring the needy and the harbourless into thy house: when thou shalt see one naked, cover him, and despise not thy own flesh. Then shall thy light break forth as the morning, and thy health shall speedily arise, and thy justice shall go before thy face. Then shalt thou call, and the Lord shall hear, &c. If thou wilt take away the chain out of the midst of thee, and cease to speak that which is good for nothing. When thou shalt pour out thy soul to the hungry, and shalt satisfy the afflicted soul, then shall thy light rise up in darkness.—And the Lord will give thee rest continually, and fill thy soul with brightness.—And thou shalt be like a watered garden, and like a fountain whose waters shall not fail.*

Conclude ever to make it the great business of thy fast to break thy bands asunder, and to put away from thee the chains of sin; and then, by exercising works of mercy, thou thyself wilt be entitled to mercy, and to all that is good.

First Sunday in Lent.

On the Fast of Lent.

CONSIDER first, that a fast of forty days has been recommended by the law and the prophets, and sanctified by the example of Christ himself. Moses fasted forty days (*Exod. xxiv. 18.*) whilst he conversed with God in the mountain, when he received the divine law. And again, when the people had sinned, he returned to the Lord, to the mountain, and fasted other forty days, *Exod. xxxiv. 28.* Elias fasted forty days in the wilderness, before he came to the mountain of God; where he was favoured with the vision of God, as far as man is capable of seeing him in this life, *3 Kings xix. 8.* Christ our Lord, before he

entered upon his mission of preaching his Gospel, retired into a wilderness, and there employed forty days in prayer and fasting, *St. Matt. iv. 2.* How happy shall we be, if, by imitating, according to our small ability, these great examples, we may also draw near to God, by this forty days fast of Lent! But then, in order to this, we must join, as they did, retirement and much prayer with our fasting.

Consider 2dly, that the forty days fast of Lent, among Christians, is primitive and apostolical: it began with Christianity itself; and, with Christianity, has been received by all people and nations which have received the faith and law of Christ. Embrace then, O my soul, this solemn penitential fast, this apostolical practice, this precious remnant of primitive discipline. But see it be with a penitential spirit. *Behold now is the acceptable time, behold now is the day of salvation, 2 Cor. vi. 2.* Take thou care not to receive so great a grace in vain. These forty days, if thou make good use of them, will be happy days to thee. *O seek the Lord whilst he may be found, call upon him while he is near. Isai. lv.*

Consider 3dly, that the great business of Lent is to do penance for our sins; to go daily with Magdalen to the feet of Christ; to wash them in spirit with penitential tears; to make our confession to him, and to lay down all our sins at his feet, begging that he would cancel them with his precious blood; to renounce them for ever; to detest them, and to bewail them in his sight; to offer him our poor hearts, with all our affections, in order to make him the best amends we can for our past disloyalties, by loving him with all our power for the time to come: that, as he said of Magdalen, *St. Luke vii. Many sins are forgiven her, because she hath loved much:* so he may also say of us. In this spirit we should make a daily offering of our fasting, and of all the other self-denials, and penitential exercises of this time, to be united to the passion and

death of the Son of God, and so to be accepted of, through him, in satisfaction for our sins. O do this, my soul, during these forty days, and thou shalt live.

Conclude to make good use of this holy time, in which mercy flows. O admire and adore that mercy which has endured thee so long, and which presses thee, now at least, to return to thy God. O take care, lest provoked by thy impenitence, he cut thee off in thy sins!

Monday after the first Sunday in Lent.

On the Ends of the Institution of Lent.

CONSIDER first, that, besides the great business of doing penance for the sins of the year, and of our whole lives, which is the main design of Lent; it is also instituted to be, in a particular manner, a time of devotion, in which we may worthily commemorate the sufferings and death of our Redeemer, and make them the subject of our daily meditations: in which also we may, by more than ordinary recollection and prayer, dispose our souls for duly celebrating the great paschal solemnity, and imitating therein the resurrection of the Son of God: and in which we may in such manner cleanse and purify our souls by spiritual exercises, as to be fit to approach worthily (as the church commands us) to the divine mysteries at Easter. See, my soul, thou keep Lent in such manner as to answer these ends.

Consider 2dly, that Lent is a time which God particularly claims for himself, as being the tithe of the year, which therefore ought to be set aside for him: as in the law he appointed that the tithes of all things should be sanctified to him, *Leviticus* xxvii. And surely nothing could be more just, than that we should offer our tithes, at least, to him that gives us all. How justly then does he require of us the tithes of our years, by our dedicating these forty days, in a special manner, to his service? How religiously then, and how holily, ought we to spend this time of

Lent, that our performances may answer the great design of consecrating the tithe of the year to the divine service? An offering made to God ought to be without blemish : let our Lent offering be such.

Consider 3dly, that the time of Lent ought to be for people that live in the world, what a spiritual retreat is for regular communities. That is, a time in which, retiring as much as can be from the noise and distractions of the world, they may enter into themselves, and take a serious view of the whole state of their interior. Now is the time for them to see and examine how the soul stands affected, with relation to her God, to her neighbours, and to herself: how she acquits herself of all her duties, as well those incumbent on all Christians, as those that are proper to her respective calling, or relative to those under her charge. Now is the time to search diligently after such secret sins as are apt to lie lurking in the soul, disguised by some pretext of good, or wrapt up under the folds of self-love. In a word, now is the time to acquire a true knowledge of ourselves, in order to apply a proper remedy to all our evils, and to lay a solid foundation of a good life for the future.

Conclude to answer, in the best manner thou art able, all these ends of the institution of Lent; and particularly apply thyself at this time, to take as it were in pieces, the whole method of thy life, and to reform all that thou findest amiss.

Tuesday.

On the Examination of the State of our Interior.

CONSIDER first, the dreadful mischiefs that follow from our not knowing the true state of our own souls. Alas! what would it avail us, to have all other sciences, and to know all things else, if we should not know what passes within ourselves, and so should want this most necessary of all sciences, the knowledge of ourselves. Ah! how many are there in the world, who pass their whole lives in mortal sin, and yet, for want of looking into themselves,

are not aware of it ! How many imagine themselves to be alive, *and have the name of being alive, and yet are dead !* Apoc. iii. 1. How many imagine their souls to be rich and wealthy, *and to stand in need of nothing, and they know not that* in the very truth, and in the sight of God, *they are wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked,* Apoc. iii. 17. *O from my hidden sins cleanse me, O Lord ; and from the sins of others spare thy servant,* Ps. xviii. 13.

Consider 2dly, that, to prevent so great an evil, every Christian ought often to examine into the true state of his interior, and to consider seriously what are the real dispositions of his soul, especially with regard to his God. He cannot be in the state of grace, or in the way of salvation, if he love not God above all things. Reflect, O my soul, is there nothing thou lovest more than God ? Is there nothing that takes place of him in thy affections ? How comes it then, that commonly God is so seldom thought on, in the course of the day ? How comes it that, upon every occasion, worldly honour, temporal interest, sensual pleasures, the gratifying thyself, or the world, makes thee turn thy back on him ? The true lover is ever thinking on the object of his love, and never better content than when in company, and conversing with his beloved. Is thy love of God such as this ? Art thou resolutely determined, for no consideration whatsoever, for no honour, no interest, no pleasure, no human respect, no fear, no love, for nothing in fine, that the world can give or take away, to be disloyal to thy God ? If not, the love of God is not in thee, and thou art none of his. This is the best rule, by which thou mayest know, whether thou really lovest God or no. But then, to know thy true disposition in this regard, examine thy works. *If you love me, saith the Lord, keep my commandments,* St. John xiv. 15.

Consider 3dly, that thou must also examine how thy soul stands affected with regard to thy neighbour. For here is another great branch of the Christian's duty, in which his soul is no less interest-

ed, and in which too many deceive themselves. O my soul, art thou *just* in thy thoughts, words, and works, to thy neighbour? Dost thou live up to the rules of *charity* in his regard? Art thou not censorious in thy judgment; bitter in thy speeches; hasty and passionate in thy carriage to him? Dost thou never injure him in his reputation, by backbiting and detraction; in his honour, by affronts; in his friends, by tale-bearing; in the peace of his mind, by derision or contempt? Art thou just in all thy dealings with him? Dost thou pay him his dues? Dost thou keep nothing from him unjustly? Dost thou do by him, in whatever station of life he may be, as thou wouldst be done by, if thou wert in his case? Is there no rancour in thy heart against any one soul upon earth? No secret hatred, malice, or envy? Examine thyself well upon all these heads, in which millions affect to deceive themselves, to their eternal perdition.

Conclude to labour seriously for the knowledge of thyself, that thou mayest effectually amend thy life, and secure thy soul. For why shouldst thou suffer thyself to be any longer blindfolded by passion, or affected ignorance, with evident danger of falling down the dreadful precipice, which leads to a miserable eternity?

Ember-Wednesday, first Week in Lent.

On a further Examination of the Soul.

CONSIDER first, that we must also examine the state of our souls as to hidden sins, and as to such sins as we may be guilty of in others; for, in these kinds, many are guilty of great disorders, while they flatter themselves that all goes well with them. Few indeed are ignorant of their *carnal* sins; though even in these, sometimes persons deceive themselves, but very many take little or no notice of their *spiritual* sins, which are more interior; and, though less infamous in the eyes of men, are more heinous in the sight of God; see then thou examine thyself thoroughly upon these heads; for spiritual sins are

commonly very subtle, and not easily discerned, without a diligent search. Nay sometimes, such as are the most guilty, will not believe themselves guilty of them. These spiritual sins are of one of these five kinds, *viz.* pride, covetousness, envy, secret malice, and spiritual sloth. Look into them one by one, and if thy self-love will suffer thee to be impartial in thy search, in all appearance thou wilt find thyself more guilty than thou art aware of.

Consider 2dly, in particular, how full thou art of thyself; how fond of every thing that flatters thee; how presumptuous of thy own sufficiency; how apt to compare thyself with others in thy thoughts, and to give thyself the preference; how apt to despise others; how unwilling to suffer any reproof or contradiction; how ready to swell with indignation upon every trifling opposition or contempt; how apt to break out into a storm upon every supposed affront; how much concerned at what the world will think, or say, of thy performances; how much more solicitous for thy worldly honour, than for the glory of God. And what is all this but an unhappy pride, which is laying waste thy soul, and corrupting its very vitals, whilst thou art insensible of it. See also as to covetousness, whether the love of the mammon of the world does not reign in thy heart. Alas, the greatest miser does not think himself covetous! but the tree is to be known by its fruits: such as an anxious care and perpetual solicitude about the things of the world; and upon this account neglecting prayer, and other spiritual duties, or being continually distracted in them; thinking more of thy money than of thy God; locking up thy heart in thy chest; losing thy peace upon every loss or disappointment; and a strange unwillingness to part with thy money, even when the honour of God, or thy neighbour's necessities, call for it. See if nothing of this be thy case. See if thou art not more afraid of losing thy worldly substance, than thy God. If so, thou art not in the way to heaven.

Consider 3dly, as to the other *spiritual* sins; whether there be no person for whom thou hast a secret *envy*? No one whose praises, whose endowments, corporal or spiritual, whose virtues, or performances, make thee uneasy, and gnaw thy soul, as if their advantages were a lessening to the honour, praise, and esteem which thou affectest? O how common is this mortal crime, and how many detractions and other evils does it produce! and yet how many take very little notice of it? Is it not thy case? Then as to secret *malice*, rancour, and hatred, how dost thou stand affected? Look well into thyself; for here again we are too apt to deceive ourselves: but we must judge of the tree by the fruits; that is, by our way of thinking, speaking, and acting, with-relation to our supposed enemies. Now there is so very wide a difference between the fruits of charity and those of malice, between love and hatred, that if we are sincere in our examination, we cannot well be deceived therein. And as to *spiritual sloth*, which is a clog upon the soul, infinitely opposite to the love of God, to the spirit of prayer, to a due care in frequenting the sacraments and other duties; is not this also a most common evil, which frequently amounts to a mortal sin: and yet how seldom do lukewarm souls take notice of it?

Conclude upon declaring an eternal war against all these vices: and particularly against that which thou hast reason to apprehend is thy predominant passion, that is to say, the chiefest and most dangerous of all thy enemies.

Thursday in Ember-Week.

On other Sins which we are to examine into.

CONSIDER first, that in order to know the true state of our souls, we must also examine how we discharge ourselves of all our duties; and not only of all such duties as are common to all Christians, but also of all such as are particularly incumbent on us in our station of life. Alas! how many take no-

tice of their sins of commission, but not of their sins of omission ! How many make some account of such duties as relate to the regulating *themselves*, but are not concerned to see that others under their charge serve the Lord ! How many examine themselves upon the commandments of God, and the precepts of the church, as far as they appertain to all Christians in general ; but pass over the particular duties and obligations annexed to their calling or state of life ; to which nevertheless they are strictly bound either by law, or by covenant, or by oath, or by the very nature of the calling. Reflect thou, my soul, on all these things. The grand duty of man, the great end for which he came into the world, his whole business in life, is to dedicate and consecrate his very being and his whole life to the love and the service of his Maker. All thy days, O man, are given thee for this end. The omission of this great duty is highly criminal : it is usually the first sin that man falls into. And yet how few sufficiently reflect on it ! Alas, how many millions of souls are lost by this omission ; who though they are neither guilty of blasphemy, nor murder, nor adultery, nor theft, &c. are justly condemned for the omission of dedicating themselves in earnest to the love and service of God !

Consider 2dly, Christian soul, what care thou takest of thy children, of thy servants, and of all under thy charge. The regularity of thy own life will never bring thee to heaven, if, through thy negligence of them, their lives be irregular. Reflect well on this ; and see if thou art not guilty of many criminal omissions in this kind. Again reflect on the particular obligations annexed to thy calling ; and how far thou performest what the law of God or man requires of thee in thy station : for example, that of a pastor, a teacher, a lawyer, a physician, a tradesman, a servant, &c. See whether thou makest good thy covenants : and if any oath were required at thy first admission, or afterwards, see what care thou hast taken to discharge thyself of the obligation of

it ? Alas ! how many, in entering upon their respective callings, take certain oaths, and afterwards perhaps think no more of them ! And can this be the way to heaven ? See then how necessary it is that a Christian, who has a mind to secure his soul, should look well into himself.

Consider 3dly, whether thou hast nothing to apprehend with regard to thy salvation, from the sins of other men ? And this not only from thy *omissions*, or thy neglect of restraining those under thy charge from sin, or of keeping away from them the occasions of sin. But because of thy *commissions* too, in promoting or encouraging sin by word or work ; in enticing or provoking to sin ; in flattering or applauding people in their sins ; and in contributing to keep up the pernicious maxims of the world, in point of honour, interest, and pleasure, by which numbers of poor souls are enslaved to sin, and dragged into hell. Reflect withal how little guard thou generally hast upon thy words, in thy ordinary conversation, and whether thy carelessness therein may not frequently be attended with very bad consequences to the souls of thy neighbours, by giving them some occasion or other of sin, either in thought, word, or deed ? Alas ! how many sins will be brought to light in the great day, which careless souls in the time of this life but little apprehend, and so continue till death in the guilt of them.

Conclude to make such good use of the spiritual exercises of this time ; and especially to study so well what passes within thee, as to be no longer blind to thy own sins, and a stranger at home. O my God ! do thou give me grace, now at least, perfectly to know myself. O grant that I may renounce and do penance for all my past sins, and henceforward settle my soul upon a more secure bottom, which may stand for eternity.

Friday in Ember-Week.

On exercising Works of Mercy.

CONSIDER first, that in order to find mercy, we must shew mercy. *Blessed are the merciful,* saith our Lord, *for they shall obtain mercy,* Matt. v. 7. And on the other hand, *judgment without mercy,* saith St. James, *to him that hath not done mercy,* ch. ii. 13. God expressly rejects the fasts of them that refuse to shew mercy to their neighbour, *Isaias* lviii. He declares he will neither give ear to their prayers, nor accept of their sacrifices, *Prov.* xxi. 13. *Isai.* i. 11, 15, 16, 17, 18. If then, my soul, thou desirest at this time effectually to sue for the divine mercy, in the forgiveness of thy sins; see that thy fasting and prayer be accompanied with alms-deeds. *If thou have much, give abundantly; if thou have little, take care even so to be willing to bestow a little,* Tob. iv. 9. This mercy and charity exercised by thee, will recommend thy fasting and thy prayer to that God who is all charity, and whose tender mercies are above all his works.

Consider 2dly, how many ways, and upon how many occasions, the word of God recommends alms-deeds to us. It promises an eternal kingdom in heaven, to all them that are diligent in this exercise, and threatens with eternal damnation all them that are negligent, St. *Matt.* xxv. It shews that the definitive sentence, which is to decide our eternal doom, is to pass upon each one of us according to his behaviour in this respect, *ibid.* It encourages even the greatest sinners, *to redeem their sins with alms, and their iniquities with works of mercy to the poor,* Daniel iv. 24. It assures them, that by the means of alms, *all things shall be made clean to them,* St. Luke xi. 41. That *alms deliver from all sin, and from death, and will not suffer the soul to go into darkness,* Tob. iv. 11. That Christ considers what is done for the poor, as done for himself, and will re-

ward it accordingly, St. *Matt.* xxv. That *he that hath mercy on the poor, lendeth to the Lord, and he will repay him*, Prov. xix. 17. To pass over many other texts, promising all kind of good, both for this world and the next, to works of mercy; and threatening the hard-hearted and unmerciful with the worst of God's judgments. O ! my soul, attend to these heavenly oracles : embrace with all the affection of thy heart this lovely virtue of mercy, the favourite daughter of the great King. It was mercy brought him down from heaven to thee; and mercy must carry thee up to him thither.

Consider 3dly, the conditions that must accompany our alms, that they may be capable of producing these great effects. 1. They must be liberal, and proportionable to our ability : *he that soweth sparingly shall reap but sparingly*. What then can the worldling expect, who for every penny he gives to God, in the person of the poor, gives a pound to the devil, and to his own passions and lusts ? 2dly, Our alms must be given with a pure intention : that is, not out of ostentation, or vain-glory, or for any other human motive, but for God's sake: otherwise they will have no reward from God. 3dly, Our alms can never effectually procure for us the remission of our sins ; except we join with them a sincere repentance for our sins, together with an effectual resolution of loving and serving God for the future. Christians, take good notice of these three articles : and particularly remember, that neither alms, nor any thing else, can give any manner of security to any man that wilfully persists in mortal sin.

Conclude to esteem, love, and practise, upon every occasion, this blessed virtue of mercy. But see that thy intention be pure : and beware of losing the benefit of it by an impenitent heart.

*Saturday in Ember-Week.**On the Spiritual Works of Mercy.*

CONSIDER first, that the *spiritual works of mercy*, by which we relieve our neighbours in the necessities of their souls, are of far greater value in the sight of God, than such as merely relate to their bodies. If then he is pleased to promise such ample rewards to the feeding the hungry, cloathing the naked, and such-like good works, which relate only to these corruptible carcasses, and to the short time of our mortal pilgrimage : how much more will he esteem and reward those works of mercy and charity, by which immortal souls, made after God's own image, and redeemed by the blood of Christ, are drawn out of darkness and sin, rescued from Satan and hell, and brought to God and a happy eternity ? *He that causeth a sinner to be converted from the error of his way, saith the scripture, shall save his soul from death, and shall cover a multitude of sins, St. James v. 20. And they that instruct many to justice, shall shine as stars for all eternity, Daniel xii. 3.*

Consider 2dly, that the spiritual works of mercy are principally exercised : by reclaiming sinners from their evil ways, even the ways of death and hell, by admonitions, remonstrances, fraternal corrections, &c. by enlightening and instructing such as, through ignorance, are in danger of losing their precious soul ; or by procuring them this light and instruction from other proper persons : by comforting the afflicted ; encouraging the pusillanimous ; upholding and assisting them that are under temptations ; reconciling such as are at variance ; bearing with all, forgiving all, ever overcoming evil with good, and praying for all. O how happy ; how precious in the sight of God, is a life spent in such works of mercy and charity as these are ! And how happy will that death be, that shall conclude such a life ! O my soul, that we may lead such a life ! O that we may die such a death !

Consider 3dly, that these spiritual works of mercy are not only the most acceptable of all, and the most meritorious in the sight of God, but also are of strict obligation : and this not only to pastors, but to all other Christians, according to their circumstances and abilities. Charity is a virtue of universal obligation : and the principal object of that love, which charity obliges us to have for our neighbours, is the eternal welfare of their immortal souls. If then, we can unconcernedly see numbers of souls crowding into hell, without affording them all the help that lies in our power, in order to rescue them from that extremity of endless misery : is it not evident, that we have no charity for them? and if not, may not our case one day be as bad as theirs? What then must we do? We must gladly lay hold of every opportunity of contributing what lies in us to the conversion and salvation of any one of these poor unhappy souls : and we shall quickly find that opportunities of this nature will not be wanting, if we take the matter to heart. At least there are two ways, and those the most effectual of all, of reclaiming sinners, and bringing them to God ; which are certainly in the power of every one, and from which no one can be excused : and these are, the example of a holy life, and the efficacy of fervent prayer poured out to God in behalf of poor sinners.

Conclude ever to make use of these two, the most effectual, ways of bringing sinners to God : yet so as not to neglect any other means that lie in thy power. What a comfort will it be to thee ; what an honour, what a happiness, to be the instrument of God in the salvation of souls : that same great work, which brought the Son of God from heaven! But what dreadful punishments mayest thou not justly apprehend, if for want of this charity, any of these souls should perish, because thou wouldst not lend them a helping hand, to withdraw them from the precipice to which they were running. Ah ! will not their blood one day cry to heaven for vengeance against thee!

*Second Sunday in Lent.**On Prayer.*

CONSIDER first, that the time of Lent is not only a time for fasting and giving alms ; but is also in a particular manner a time of devotion and prayer. Fasting, alms, and prayer, are three sisters, which ought to go hand in hand, and, with united forces, to offer a holy violence to heaven, which is not to be taken but by violence. If then prayer be at all times necessary ; if it be the very life of a Christian soul, it is certainly a most indispensable part of our duty at this holy time. But what is prayer ? It is a conversation with God : it is a raising up of the mind and of the heart to God : it is an address of the soul to God, in which we present him with our homage, our adoration, praise, and thanksgiving : we exercise ourselves in his presence in acts of faith, hope, and love ; and we lay before him all our necessities, and those of the whole world ; begging mercy, grace, and salvation at his hands. O my soul, how happy it is ; how glorious, how pleasant, to entertain thyself thus with thy God ! Is it not in some measure anticipating the joys of heaven ? For what is heaven but to be with God ?

Consider 2dly, more in particular, the most excellent advantages the soul enjoys by the means of prayer. It gives her a free access, whensoever she pleases, to come before the throne of his Divine Majesty, and to make her addresses to him, at any hour of the day or night, with a positive assurance from him of meeting with a favourable audience : it admits her, as often as she pleases, into his private closet, where she may find him all alone, and treat him with all freedom as long as she will ; and she may be assured he will never be wearied with her importunity, nor shut the door against her. Will any prince of the earth allow any thing like this even to his greatest favourite ? O Christian soul, what an ho-

nour is this ! And why art not thou more ambitious of it ?

Consider 3dly, how delightful prayer is to the soul that truly loveth God. The true lover finds the greatest pleasure in thinking of, and speaking with the object of his love. If then the soul truly love God, nothing will be more sweet to her than this heavenly intercourse and conversation with her sovereign good. The saints have found it so, when they have passed whole nights in prayer, and thought the time very short, through the delight they found in the company of their beloved. O my soul, if thou find no such delight in prayer, see if it be not for want of love.

Conclude to embrace this heavenly exercise of prayer at all opportunities. Here is to be found thy greatest honour, interest, and pleasure : and in a word, thy whole happiness both for time and eternity.

Second Monday in Lent.

On the Necessity of Prayer.

CONSIDER first, that all Christians are indispensably obliged to prayer : because it is a homage and worship we owe to God. He is our first beginning, and our last end : he is the inexhaustible source of all our good : therefore he justly expects we should daily worship him, and daily acknowledge our total dependence on him, by a diligent application to him by prayer. We are all bound, both by our creation and redemption, frequently to present ourselves before the throne of God with acts of adoration, praise, and thanksgiving : we are all bound to honour him, by frequent acts of faith, hope, and love : and it is in prayer, and by prayer, we perform these duties : they are all neglected, if prayer be neglected. It was appointed in the divine law, that twice every day, viz. morning and evening, an unspotted lamb should be offered in sacrifice, in the temple of God : as a daily worship, he expected from his people : and shall not the children of the

new law be equally obliged, twice a day at least, to offer up their homage of prayer in the temple of their hearts. Daniel chose rather to be cast into the den of the lions, than not worship his God by prayer, three times a day. And shall not this convince Christians of the strict necessity of this exercise.

Consider 2dly, the necessity of prayer, inasmuch as it is, by divine appointment, the channel through which the graces and blessings of God are to flow into our souls. We can do nothing towards our salvation, without the grace of God : but with his grace we can do all things. Now prayer is the great means of procuring and obtaining this all necessary grace : *Ask, and you shall receive ; seek, and you shall find ; knock, and it shall be opened to you.* O how often is this repeated and inculcated in holy writ ! How much are we there pressed to be earnest and fervent in prayer ! Does our God then stand in need of us, or our prayers ? No certainly. He stands not in need of us, but we continually stand in need of him ; and therefore, out of love to us, he is so often pressing to us to pray : because he sees that without frequent and fervent prayer, we must be for ever miserable. Blessed be his name for this his infinite charity.

Consider 3dly, the necessity of prayer, from the warfare in which we are engaged, the whole time of our mortal pilgrimage, with three most desperate enemies, the world, the flesh, and the devil. We are surrounded with dangers on all sides, and with dangers that threaten us with nothing less than the loss of God, and a miserable eternity. We walk in the midst of snares : our way is beset with robbers and murderers : we breathe a pestilential air : we live in a *world*, that is very wicked ; in the midst of worldlings, a deluded people, who are strangers to the gospel ; who by word and work encourage sin ; and seek to drag us along with them into the broad road of perdition. We carry about with us a load

of flesh, which weighs down the poor soul, and tyrannizes over her with its passions and lusts: these hold a correspondence with the third enemy, the *devil*, and are ever ready to betray us to him, and to make us his companions in never-ending woe. We have whole legions of his wicked angels to fight against; crafty and malicious spirits, bent upon sparing no pains to destroy us. And what shall we do? or what can we do, to escape all these dangers, and to overcome all these enemies? We must *watch* and *pray*: and God will watch over us, and give us the victory over them all. Prayer will engage God on our sides, and all our enemies shall fall before us; for if God is with us, it is no matter who is against us.

Conclude to have recourse to prayer in all dangers and temptations: and since our whole life is full of dangers and temptations, let us make our whole life, as much as possible, a life of prayer.

Second Tuesday in Lent.

On Attention in Prayer.

CONSIDER first, that the most essential condition to make our prayer either acceptable to God, or beneficial to ourselves, is a serious attention: it deserves not the name of prayer without it. To pray with wilful distractions is a mockery: it is affronting the Divine Majesty. *This people, saith he, honoureth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me.* Isai. xxix. See, my soul, if this be not too often thy case? and if so, seek a speedy remedy for so great an evil. There needs no greater to sink thee into the very depth of all misery for time and eternity. For as he cannot fail to live well, who has found the way to pray well; so he that prays ill, must not expect to live well, or die well.

Consider 2dly, that in order to pray well, our heart and mind must go always along with what we are about; or, which is the best attention of all, and most conducing to bring us to the love of God, our

thought must then be fixed in God; not considered as abroad, but as within our own souls; not as represented by corporeal images, but as the being of all beings, the eternal, incomprehensible, infinite truth. But that we may be better able to keep this attention in the time of prayer, we must hearken to the admonition of the wise man: *Before prayer, prepare thy soul, and be not like a man that tempteth God.* This preparing the soul for prayer consists in discharging before-hand, as much as possible, all foreign thoughts; restraining even at other times all the roving of the imagination, and vain amusements; untying the heart from its disorderly affections; and beginning by a serious recollection of the soul in the presence of God, and an earnest address to him, to teach us, and help us to pray as we ought.

Consider 3dly, that if, after taking these precautions, we still find ourselves hurried away with a multitude of distractions in the time of prayer, we must not be discouraged: for as long as our will has no share in these distractions, they will not be imputed to us, nor hinder the fruit of our prayers. It is the heart, it is the will that God regards; our care must be to keep this right: to set out at first with a good heart, and a will to seek our heavenly Father, and not to retract this by any wilful turning aside from him; and we may be assured that he that seeks, and sees the heart, will not be offended at the involuntary wanderings of the imagination, which can never separate the soul from him.

Conclude upon ever keeping a close guard upon thy mind, and upon thy heart, if thou desire to pray well: and this not only at the time of prayer, but at all times. For if thou live in a constant dissipation of thought at other times, and with a heart set upon irregular affections and cheating vanities; how canst thou expect, but that both thy mind and heart in the time of prayer will be still running after those things they are accustomed to; and which they have unhappily made their treasure, instead of God?

Wednesday after the Second Sunday in Lent.

On other Conditions of Prayer.

CONSIDER first, those words of St. James, iv. 3. *You ask, and you receive not, because you ask amiss.* Great promises are made in holy writ in favour of prayer; but these are to be understood provided we ask for *what* we ought, and in the *manner* we ought. But if we are more concerned for the temporal goods of this transitory life, than for the eternal welfare of our souls, and make such things as those the principal subject of our prayers; we must not think much if God does not hear us: for in these cases we often know not what we ask; or we know not at least what is expedient for us; and it is a mercy of God not to grant us those things, which, if he were to grant them, might be the occasion of the loss of our souls. In our prayer, we must *seek first the kingdom of God, and his justice*, and as to those other things, God will give us them as far as he sees expedient for us. And if at any time we pray for such things, or pray to be delivered from sufferings and crosses; we must ever pray with submission, and conformity to the will of God, *if it be his will*, and if he sees it expedient, and not otherwise: *Not my will, but thine be done.*

Consider 2dly, that we must not only pray for such things as are truly good, as being agreeable to God's holy will, and conducing to our true and everlasting welfare; but we must also pray in a proper manner; that is, with a pure intention, and with a lively faith, and confidence in God. Great promises are made in Scripture to prayer: but it is to prayer made with faith, and confidence in God. The honour of his Divine Majesty is engaged to stand by those that pray with a strong belief, and trust in him: but as for him that prayeth, *wavering in faith*, let him not think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord, James i. 6. If then we would pray to the purpose, we must come before God with a lively

sense of his boundless power, goodness, and mercy; with a conviction of his being ever faithful to his promises, and that his divine truth cannot fail. And we must not trust in the least in ourselves, nor ground ourselves upon any merits of our own; but put an entire confidence in God, who is more desirous to give us his grace than we are to ask it: and we shall quickly experience how ready he will be to shew us mercy, and to hear our prayers. So true it is, that no one ever trusted in him and was confounded.

Consider 3dly, that, in order to obtain our requests, we must take care to present them in the name of Jesus Christ, and through the merits of his death and passion. What we ask of God, is mercy, grace, and salvation: now our faith assures us, there is no means of coming at mercy, grace, or salvation, but through Jesus Christ. *No one can come to the Father but by him*, St. John xiv. 6. Whatsoever we shall ask the Father in his name, shall be given to us, chap. xvi. 23, 24. But *there is no other name under heaven given to men, whereby we must be saved*, Acts iv. 12. Here then is the great ground of that faith and confidence with which we draw near to God, and address our prayers to him: the Son of God has died for us: he has made over to us the merits of his death and passion: he has purchased for us those graces which we pray for: his blood continually pleads in our behalf. Through him then *let us go with confidence to the throne of grace: that we may obtain mercy, and find grace in seasonable aid*, Heb. iv. 10.

Conclude to take the blood of Christ along with you, as often as you desire to go within the veil, by prayer, into the sanctuary of God: this will open to you the way to all mercy, grace, and salvation.

Thursday after the Second Sunday in Lent.

On Fervour in Prayer.

CONSIDER first, the necessity of fervour in prayer: that is to say, that we should be quite in earnest in our addresses to God. For how can we expect that God should hear, or regard our supplications, when we present them with so much indolence and indifference, as if we told the Almighty we did not care whether he heard us or no? Such lukewarm prayer as this, instead of drawing down his blessing upon us, will rather move him to indignation. It is doing the work of God negligently: which is a thing of the worst of consequences to a Christian soul. Fervour and earnestness in prayer is recommended to us by the great example of the Son of God, *who in the days of his flesh, with a strong cry and tears, offered up his prayers and supplications:* Heb. v. 7. It is recommended by the doctrine and example of all the Saints. Not a fervour of the imagination, but of the will: not expressed by the motion of the head, or any outward gestures of the body, but consisting in the strong desires of the soul, sueing with all her power for the mercy and grace of God.

Consider 2dly, how our Lord recommends to us, St. Luke xviii. 1. *That we should always pray, and not to faint;* that is, not to be discouraged, nor to give over, if we do not immediately find the effect of our prayers; but, by the example of the poor widow, whose importunity prevailed even upon a wicked judge, still continue to knock at the gate of heaven, till God is pleased to open to us, according to his merciful promise. Perseverance in prayer, and a holy importunity, were the means by which the Saints obtained such great things of God. It is well if the want of these be not the true reason why we are not favoured in the like manner. The hand of God is certainly not shortened. But, alas! we have not that faith, that fervour, that perseverance,

which they had, who, like their Lord, passed sometimes even whole nights in prayer.

Consider 3dly, that nothing contributes more to render our prayers effectual with God, than a profound humility. *A contrite and humble heart God never despises. The prayer of him that humbleth himself, saith the wise man, Ecclus. xxxv. 21. shall pierce the clouds—and not depart till the Most High behold.* Humility always finds admittance with God, who ever *resists the proud, and gives his grace to the humble.* If then, my soul, thou desire that thy prayers should find admittance, see they be ever accompanied with humility. *I will speak to my Lord,* said holy Abraham, *Gen. xviii. 27. whereas I am but dust and ashes.* Alas! poor soul of mine, thy whole being is a mere nothing in the sight of that great God, before whom thou presentest thyself in prayer. His majesty fills heaven and earth; and both heaven and earth dwindle away to just nothing at all in his presence. But what a figure then do thy crimes and abominations make in his eyes! and how wretched an object do they make of thee! See, then, what pressing motives thou hast to humble thyself in prayer, in consideration of thy sins; and of what thou hast deserved by them. Nothing but humble prayer can remedy all thy evils, and this will effectually do it.

Conclude ever to pray with fervour and humility: and in order thereto, begin always thy prayer by placing thyself in the presence of God; and humbly imploring the assistance of his divine Spirit. None but he can teach thee to pray well.

Friday after the Second Sunday in Lent.

On Mental Prayer.

CONSIDER first, that the great advantages, and excellence of prayer, are chiefly found in *mental prayer*, that is to say, in such kind of prayer as is not confined to any form of words, but is made in the secret closet of the heart; where the soul all

alone, finds her God alone, and entertains herself with him. The advantages of this kind of prayer, beyond that which is only *vocal*, are, that it brings us nearer to God, and to his heavenly light; that it employs all the powers of the soul, *viz.* the memory, the understanding, and the will, about him; that it opens the eyes of the soul to the knowledge of God, and of ourselves; and is the true school in which we learn to despise the world, and its cheating vanities, and to love God with our whole hearts. O, my soul, see thou daily frequent this school of divine love!

Consider 2dly, that the Saints, and other masters of a spiritual life, have prescribed certain rules and methods of mental prayer, with a variety of subjects, to make the practice easy. According to these rules and methods, the soul begins by placing herself in the presence of her God, and by humbly imploring his divine assistance: then the memory represents the subject of the prayer; and the understanding is employed in considering the heavenly truths discovered therein: till the will is properly affected therewith, and stirred up to the fear and love of God; to an humble confidence in his goodness; to a sense of gratitude for his benefits; to a horror of sin; and a sincere repentance for past offences; and such like affections: which ought to be followed by good and firm resolutions of avoiding evil and doing good; and in particular, of the immediate amending such failings as one is most subject to. Such is the method of mental prayer, by way of meditation, recommended by St. Ignatius, St. Francis Sales, and other Saints; and both very easy and beneficial to Christian souls; by its serving greatly to enlighten their understanding, and to inflame their will. Give thanks, my soul; to thy God, for the lights he has communicated to his Saints, to direct thee, in this sovereign exercise of mental prayer; and particularly practise what they recommend, with regard to the insisting principally, in thy prayer, upon affections and resolutions; lest otherwise thy meditations fall short of

answering the chiefest end of prayer, which is the love of God, and the amendment of thy life.

Consider 3dly, that although this method of mental prayer be excellent, and such as ought to be followed, where the soul does not find herself invited and attracted another way; yet *as the spirit breatheth where he will*, (John iii. 8.) and as we must not pretend to set bounds, or give rules to him, who expects to be ever acknowledged as sovereign Lord and King within our souls, and to establish his reign there by mental prayer: if he should be pleased to advance the soul to the more perfect prayer of contemplation (in which she finds herself drawn nearer to God, quite alone with him, and absorpt in his love), she must not be restrained by any of these usual forms, or methods, from following that happy call; and thankfully yielding herself up a captive to divine love. For it must ever be the rule of the soul which desires to have the kingdom of God established in her interior, by way of mental prayer, to follow God and his divine attractions; yet so as to take a guide along with her, for fear of being imposed upon by taking the suggestions of Satan, or of her own pride and self-love, for the motion of the Spirit of God.

Conclude to exercise thyself daily in mental prayer, as the great means to bring thee to God. Let no pretext of business call thee off from this exercise; nothing can be of half so much importance to thy true welfare: it is the very way to heaven. The morning is the best time for it, and half an hour at least ought to be dedicated to it.

Saturday after the Second Sunday in Lent.

On the Practice of Mental Prayer.

CONSIDER first, the great error of many Christians, who imagine the practice of mental prayer to be very difficult, and therefore are discouraged from undertaking this exercise, by the vain apprehension of not being able to succeed in it; an error

which the devil endeavours to propagate with all his power, because he fears nothing more than mental prayer, as being the direct ruin of his usurpation, and the establishment of the kingdom of God in the soul. To confute this error, and to take away this prejudice against so necessary an exercise, reflect that there is no such mystery in mental prayer as people vainly imagine; that it consists in considerations and affections, that is, in *thinking* and *loving*: and this, in *thinking* on subjects generally the most easy and most copious that can be, and at the same time of the utmost importance to the soul; and in *loving* him, whom by *thinking* we find to be every way the most worthy of our love. We can easily *think* of our other affairs, and even of every trifle that comes in our way: nay, thinking is so natural to us, that we cannot help thinking of something whenever we are awake. And shall *thinking* be then only difficult when we are to think of matters of the utmost consequence to our everlasting welfare? Or shall *loving* be difficult to a soul that was made to love, and that never can find rest but in her love; and whom God, by his grace, is continually inviting and pressing to love him?

Consider 2dly, that the subjects for mental prayer, which are the most necessary, are withal the most easy: such as those that are recommended by St. Teresa, in her writings, and by her own practice: viz. ‘The true knowledge of ourselves, and what we are, both as mortals and as sinners: how much we owe to God; and how much we have offended him; and how ungrateful we still are to him: what he is, and how much he loveth us; and what he hath done for us: the great humiliations and sufferings of the Son of God, for our redemption from sin and Satan: the sudden vanishing of all present things; and the eternal punishments and rewards to come.’ Such meditations as these are no ways difficult or curious, but easy for every capacity; and withal open a wide field for the soul to expatiate in: and from

these it will be easy for her to pass on to a variety of pious affections, suitable to the subject of the meditation. But more especially such considerations as these serve very much for enkindling in the soul the love of God, and a desire of being grateful to him, and of never more offending him: when we reflect what he, the Lord of Glory, infinite in majesty, has done and suffered for us, such poor wretches as we are, to deliver us from such torments, which we had deserved; and to purchase for us such glory, of his own pure mercy and goodness.

Consider 3dly, that it is also easy for the soul to practise mental prayer, in the way of familiar colloquies, or entertainments with our Lord: conversing and discoursing with him, as we would do if we had him visibly present with us; as when he was here amongst men in his mortal life: treating with him as with a parent, a friend, a benefactor; as with our high priest, our advocate, our physician, our director, our brother, our spouse, our head, our Redeemer, &c. sometimes humbling ourselves before him, confessing, and begging pardon for our many disloyalties: at other times representing to him our many infirmities; minding him of his promises; thanking him for his great patience towards us; condoling with him in his sufferings, and the daily affronts he receives from obstinate sinners; promising a new life for the future; offering all that we have, and our whole being to him; petitioning him for our many spiritual wants and necessities, &c. For, 'since we never want words,' saith St. Teresa, 'to talk with other persons, why should we, to speak with God?' And surely none can want matter to converse and discourse about with him, but such as think they owe nothing to him, and neither here, nor hereafter, desire, or expect any thing from him.

Conclude to let no apprehensions of difficulties discourage thee from the daily practice of mental prayer. The grace of God will make it easy to thee, if thou continue resolute in using thy best endea-

vours. Be not frightened if thou meet with nothing at first but dryness and distractions ; let thy will be good, and these will not hurt thee ; God, in his good time, will let the light of his countenance shine upon thee. By perseverance in this exercise, thou wilt, at length, dig out a treasure, which will abundantly recompense whatever labour thou hast taken in digging.

*Third Sunday in Lent.**On Devotion to the Passion of Christ.*

CONSIDER first, that meditating on the sufferings and death of our Redeemer, ought to be a principal part of the Christian's devotion during the time of Lent. For the season approaches in which we celebrate the yearly memory of our Lord's passion ; and therefore the church, which at no time can forget the sufferings and death of her heavenly spouse, at this time particularly recommends to her children, to set before their eyes their crucified Saviour, and to make him the great object of their devotion. His passion is the overflowing source of all mercy, grace, and salvation to us : all our good must be derived from his cross : therefore, the more we approach to him in his sufferings, and station ourselves near the cross, by pious meditations on his passion, the more plentifully shall we partake of that mercy and grace which flow continually from those fountains of life, his precious wounds. The great design of Lent is, that the sinner should now return to God, and sue for pardon and mercy ; and what better means can he have for this, than by taking along with him to the throne of mercy, the blood of Christ, by daily meditating on his passion ?

Consider 2dly, that the passion of Christ has been always, from the beginning of the world, the great object of the devotion of the children of God : in all their bloody sacrifices of old, of oxen and sheep, they celebrated before-hand the death of the Lamb of God, slain in figure from the beginning of the

world. And as, from the time of the fall of Adam, no grace could ever be derived to any man, but through the channel of the merits of the death and passion of our Redeemer, whose future coming was revealed to man immediately after his fall; so no sacrifices could ever be acceptable to God, but such as had relation to him, and through faith in him. Much more now, under the new law, are all the faithful obliged to make the Passion of Christ the great object of their devotion: since he has instituted the eucharistical sacrifice and sacrament, and left us therein the sacred mysteries of his body and blood; for this very end, that, in our most solemn worship, we should have always before our eyes his passion and death. See, my soul, how much thy God desires thou shouldst remember what he has suffered for thee! And why? Doubtless that by this means thou mightest be confirmed in his love. O blessed be his goodness for ever!

Consider 3dly, how ungrateful all such Christians are, as forget the sufferings and death of their Redeemer: may they not all be reckoned in the number of those, of whom he complained of old, by the royal prophet; that they left him alone in his passion, and took no notice of him. *I looked on my right hand and beheld, and there was no one that would know me.* Ps. cxli. Had the meanest man upon earth suffered but the tenth part of what our Lord has suffered, for the love of one of us, we should be basely ungrateful if ever we forgot his sufferings and his love. What then must we think of ourselves, if we forget the unspeakable sufferings, and infinite love of the Son of God himself, nailed to a cross, to deliver us, by his death, from the eternal torments of hell? Ah! Christians, let us never be so ungrateful!

Conclude, O my soul, at this holy time at least, daily to accompany thy crucified Jesus by meditations on his sufferings. *With Christ I am nailed to the cross,* said St. Paul, Gal. ii. 19. *My love is*

nailed to the cross, said St. Ignatius the Martyr. O that like these generous lovers we could always adhere to our crucified God.

Monday third Week in Lent.

On the great Advantages of Devotion to the Passion of Christ.

CONSIDER first, that the consideration of the passion of Christ is the sovereign means of all good to Christian souls. *As Moses lifted up the serpent in the desert, so must the Son of Man be lifted up*, said our Lord to Nicodemus, *John iii. 14, 15. that whosoever believeth in him may not perish, but may have everlasting life.* As then the looking at the brazen serpent (which was a figure of the death of Christ), was the means of divine appointment to heal the Israelites, who were bitten by the fiery serpents, sent among them for their sins; and to rescue them from temporal death: so the contemplation of the Passion of Christ, is the great means to heal Christian souls from the bites of the infernal serpent, and to deliver them from everlasting death. Every sinner that looks for mercy, must return to God with his whole heart; and that by faith, hope, love, and repentance. Now it is in meditating on the passion of Christ, we contemplate the great object of our faith; the chiefest ground of our hope; the most pressing motive of divine love; and the strongest and most effectual inducement to repentance for our sins. O! let us embrace then this great means of bringing us to God, and to all good.

Consider 2dly, that as the belief of Christ *crucified* is the most fundamental article of the Christian's faith; so it has the greatest influence of all other articles on our justification: according to that of the Apostle, *Rom. iii. 23, 24, 25. that we all have sinned: and need the glory of God. Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God hath proposed to be A PROPITIATION THROUGH FAITH IN HIS BLOOD, &c.*

It is then *through faith in his blood* we are to be introduced to the divine mercy : and it is by meditating on his passion we are to be introduced to a lively *faith in his blood*. So that the devotion to the passion of Christ is the shortest way to come at justifying faith. It has no less influence on our hope, by setting before our eyes how much God has loved us in giving his only Son ; and the great grounds we have to look for all good through him. For as the apostle writes, Rom. viii. 32. *He that spared not even his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, hath he not also with him given us all things?* O what an earnest indeed has God given us of mercy, grace, and salvation, in the blood of his Son ! O what may not poor sinners hope for, from such and so great a Redeemer ; if they apply to his sacred passion, by daily meditations ; and offer up their humble supplications to his Father, through him, and his infinite merits !

Consider 3dly, that as nothing contributes so effectually to our justification and sanctification, as the love of God ; so nothing contributes more effectually to excite this heavenly love in our souls, than the devotion to the passion of Christ. For here we most clearly discover the incomprehensible goodness of God ; and the inexhaustible treasures of his divine love for us. This excites in us a desire of returning love for love ; life for life. This attracts us, like Magdalen, to the feet of our crucified Saviour, with an earnest desire to wash them with penitential tears, flowing from, and enlivened by divine love. This makes us grieve for our past ingratitude, in having had hitherto so little sense of his goodness and love ! This makes us lament the share our sins have had in nailing him to the cross. This teaches us to offer our whole hearts to him, in order to make him the best amends we are capable of ; by loving him henceforward, both in time and eternity. Thus the devotion to the passion of Christ introduces that *penitential love*, to which our Lord attributes the remission of sins, when he says of Magdalen, *Luke*

vii. 47. *Many sins are forgiven her, because she hath loved much.*

Conclude to station thyself at the foot of the cross, and by the daily contemplation of the sufferings of thy Redeemer, so to exercise thy soul in faith, hope, love, and repentance; as to secure to thyself mercy, grace, and salvation.

Tuesday third Week in Lent.

On the Lessons Christ teaches us in his Passion.

CONSIDER first, that the devotion to the passion of our Lord, brings with it other great advantages to the soul; inasmuch as it teaches us many excellent lessons for the regulating our lives, according to his blessed example. The Son of God came down from heaven, not only to shed his blood for us, to pay our ransom; but also to give himself to us as a perfect pattern of all virtues, for us to follow in the practice of our lives: that so the image of God in man, which had been disfigured by sin, might be repaired and reformed according to this great original. Now although the whole life of Christ, was full of admirable examples of all Christian virtues, yet they no where shine forth more brightly than in his passion; in which he has drawn, as it were, under one view, all the great lessons of virtue he had taught in his life, both by his words and his works: so that the passion of Christ is the great school that the Christian must frequent by devout meditations, if he desires to learn the virtues of his Redeemer. He must look on by contemplation, and execute in work, what he sees in this great pattern, which his Lord here shews him, on Mount Calvary, if he desires to make his soul a living tabernacle for the living God. *As it was said to Moses, when he was to make the tabernacle of the covenant: see that thou make all things according to the pattern, which was shewn thee on the mount, Heb. viii. 5.*

Consider 2dly, what the lessons are that Christ more particularly desires to teach us in his passion.

The Apostle informs us, (*Philip. ii. 5—8.*) that they are principally his *obedience* and his *humility*. He *humbled himself, becoming obedient unto death, even to the death of the cross*; and this, that we might learn to be of *the like mind*. O let us study well these great lessons. Adam fell from God by *disobedience*: to gratify himself, he transgressed the holy law of God; and so entailed both sin and death upon all his offspring. By the *obedience* of the second Adam, Jesus Christ, we are delivered from sin and death; but upon articles of learning and practising his *obedience*; and that also unto death; by a constant and perpetual will of sticking close to the commandments of God at all events; and of rather dying than transgressing his holy law. This is the obedience that Christ expects we should learn from his cross; *viz.* so as to be ever willing to part even with our dearest affections, rather than offend our God; and to submit to any sufferings whatsoever rather than to disobey. This is true Christian *obedience*: and nothing less will bring us to God. My soul, thou must learn this lesson at the foot of the cross.

Consider 3dly, what a lesson of humility Christ has given us in the whole course of his passion; becoming therein *as a worm, and no man; the reproach of men, and the outcast of the people*. Ps. xxi. 7. See how he humbled himself under the malediction of our sins, in his prayer in the garden. How he humbled himself in suffering with silence all manner of calumnies, affronts, and disgraces. How he humbled himself under those ignominious and infamous torments of scourging at the pillar, crowning with thorns, and his carriage of the cross. In fine, how he humbled himself in his being crucified between two thieves, and in dying that most disgraceful death of the cross. But who is this, my soul, that thus humbles himself, and makes himself thus mean and contemptible for thee? Why it is the Lord of glory: it is the Most High: it is the great King of heaven and earth. And why does he thus

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debase himself? It is to teach thee his humility; a lesson so necessary, that without learning it, thou canst never please God, nor have any part with him.

Conclude to study well these necessary lessons, by a daily attendance upon our Lord in his passion. He came down from heaven to be our teacher: and his cross is the pulpit, from which he most feelingly and effectually preaches to our souls.

Wednesday after the third Sunday in Lent.

On other Lessons, to be learnt from Christ in his Passion.

CONSIDER first, that in the passion of Christ, his meekness is no less admirable than his humility. These two he jointly recommended in life, to be learnt of him, St. Matt. xi. 29. And these two he jointly taught in death, by his great example. *He was led as a sheep to the slaughter, and as a lamb before his shearer he opened not his mouth, Isai. liii. 7. The Lord God hath opened my ear, saith he, Isai. l. 5, 6. And I do not resist—I have given my body to the strikers, and my cheeks to them that plucked them: I have not turned away my face from them that rebuked me, and spit upon me. And why all this? But to leave us an example, that we should follow his steps, 1 Pet. ii. 21, 23. Who when he was reviled did not revile: when he suffered he threatened not: but delivered himself to him that judged him unjustly.* O let us learn, from the consideration of the behaviour of our Lord in his sufferings, to suppress all the risings of our passion and pride, and to imitate his meekness and silence; who in the midst of affronts and injuries of all kinds, *became as a man that heareth not, and as a dumb man not opening his mouth.*

Consider 2dly, that the devotion to the passion of Christ, is the great means to learn a Christian *patience*, under all the crosses and sufferings we are exposed to during our mortal pilgrimage. We cannot live without crosses and sufferings; and *in our patience* under them, we are *to possess our souls, Luke*

xxi. 19. Patience both sweetens and sanctifies all our sufferings : *patience is necessary for us ; that doing the will of God, we may receive the promise*, Heb. x. 36. *Patience hath a perfect work ; that we may be perfect and entire, failing in nothing*, James i. 4. As none hath ever gone to heaven but by the way of the cross ; so none can ever come thither without patience. Now this all necessary virtue of *patience* is best learnt in the school of the passion of Christ ; by the consideration of the multitude and variety of his sufferings, and the manner with which he endures all for the love of us. How shall a sinner (who has deserved hell for his crimes) pretend to complain or think much of any sufferings, in life or death, when, by serious meditations, he sets before his eyes the far greater sufferings of the innocent Lamb of God, endured with an unwearied patience, for his sins ?

Consider 3dly, what further lessons are to be learnt from the contemplation of the passion of Christ. 1. Of charity for our enemies ; by considering the Son of God, praying for them that crucified him, and dying for his enemies. 2. Of perfect resignation, and conformity in all things to the holy will of God ; by the great example of the prayer of our Lord in his agony ; *not my will, but thine be done* ; and the consideration of the great sacrifice that he made of himself to his Father upon the cross, without the least reserve. 3. Of the spirit of voluntary mortification, and self-denial ; by seeing how the Son of God allows himself no ease, or comfort in his sufferings, but both in life and death makes choice of what is most disagreeable to natural inclination. O my soul, these are necessary lessons indeed. See thou study them well at the foot of the cross ; sitting under the shadow of thy beloved. O dear Jesus, do thou by thy internal grace teach me effectually these virtues ; by that mercy and love, that nailed thee to the cross.

Conclude, by loving and blessing thy God, for having sent thee so excellent a master from heaven,

to teach thee the way thither by his sufferings and death. Let these be always before thy eyes, and thou shalt never miss thy way.

Thursday after the third Sunday in Lent.

On the Love that Christ has shewn us in his Passion.

CONSIDER first, those words of our Saviour, St. John xv. 13. *Greater love than this no man hath, that a man lay down his life for his friends.* And indeed, history scarcely furnishes any instance of a friendship so perfect, as that one friend should be willing to lay down his life for another. But, O divine Saviour of our souls, how imperfect is all human friendship, compared with thine! what love betwixt man and man could ever bear the least resemblance with that divine charity, which burnt in thy sacred breast, and which obliged thee to offer up thyself in sacrifice, in the midst of all kind of ignominies, and the very worst of torments, for thy very enemies; for those very wretches that crucified thee; for us miserable sinners, who were like to make no better return for all thy love, and for all thy sufferings, than sin and ingratitude: and this to that degree, as scarce ever to think of thy sufferings, or thank thee for them; but rather, by repeated treasons, to be daily treading under foot thy precious blood. O blessed by all creatures, for evermore, be this infinite goodness, and love of our dearest Redeemer! O my dear Saviour, I beseech thee, by all this love, and by all this precious blood, which thou hast so lovingly shed for me; that thou wouldst never more suffer me to be thus ungrateful to thee.

Consider 2dly, what the world would think of a prince, the only son and heir of some great monarch, who should entertain such love and friendship for one of the meanest of his slaves, as to offer himself to die a cruel and ignominious death, to rescue this slave from the just punishment of his crimes. Would not all mankind stand amazed at such an extraordinary love? And this much more, if the crime for which

this slave was condemned to die, were no less than a treasonable conspiracy against this prince, by whom he was so tenderly beloved. Ah! Christian souls, this is but a faint resemblance; a very imperfect image, of that inconceivable and inexpressible love, which our Saviour has shewn to us, in laying down his life upon a cross, to rescue us his ungrateful creatures, rebels and traitors to him and his Father, from the eternal torments of hell, which we have a thousand times deserved by our treasons against him. For as there is an infinite distance between the sovereign majesty of God, and any of his creatures, how dignified soever; so there is between that love, which our God has shewn in dying for us worms of the earth, and slaves of hell, and that love which would oblige one mortal to die for another. O dear Jesus, never suffer me to forget this love, which thou hast shewn me! O give me grace to return thee love for love.

Consider 3dly, how truly *sweet* our Lord has shewed himself to us in his passion, and how *rich in mercy*. For supposing it was his pleasure to deliver us from sin and hell: he could have brought this about with the same ease, with which he created all things out of nothing; one only word, one act of his would have been sufficient: or if he must needs suffer, and shed his blood for our redemption, one drop alone of his sacred blood, by reason of the infinite dignity of his divine person, would have been abundantly enough to atone for all the sins of ten thousand worlds. But this infinite love for us, and the desire he had to gain our hearts, and to oblige us to love him, would not be content with this, nor with any thing less, than with pouring out the last drop of his most sacred blood, by suffering for us the worst of torments, and the worst of deaths. O infinite goodness, how little art thou considered by us here? O how astonishing shalt thou appear to the saints and angels for all eternity!

Conclude with admiration at the ingratitude and

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insensibility of Christians, who make profession of believing this infinite goodness, mercy, and love; and yet are so little touched with it, or restrained by the consideration of it, from going on, daily crucifying their Lord with their sins. O divine Love, let me never be so unhappy! O let me never forget thee! O come and take full possession, at least, of my soul: and let nothing in life or death ever separate me from thee.

Friday after the third Sunday in Lent.

Other Considerations to excite in our Soul the Love of our suffering Jesus.

CONSIDER first, how *affectionate* is the love that Christ bears us in his passion. It is stronger than death: he loves us more than his own life; since he parts with his life for the love of us. It is more tender than the love of the tenderest mother; since, he voluntarily embraces the pangs of death to give us life: he sheds his blood to cleanse our souls from sin: he offers his own body in sacrifice, to be our victim, our ransom, and our food. At the very time he is suffering, and dying for us, he has every one of us in his heart; he embraces each one with an incomparable affection; weeps over each one; prays for each one; and pours out his blood for each one; no less than if he had suffered for that one alone. O my soul, had we then a place in the heart of our Jesus, when he was hanging upon the cross? and shall we ever refuse him a place in our heart? No, dear Saviour, my heart is thine: it desires nothing better than to be for ever a servant of thy love.

Consider 2dly, how *effectual* is the love that Christ shews us in his passion; it contents not itself with words or professions of affection, nor with such passing sentiments of tenderness, as we imagine we have for him, in certain fits of devotion, at times when nothing occurs for us to suffer for his sake: but it shews itself by its effects; by his taking upon himself

all our evils, to procure effectually all good for us. His love has made him divest himself of all his *beauty* and *comeliness*, and hide all his glory and majesty ; that he might become for us *despised*, and the *most abject of men*, a man of sorrow, and acquainted with *infirmity*, Isai. liii. *He hath borne our infirmities, and carried our sorrows, out of pure love* : he has made himself, for the love of us, as it were a *leper*, and as one struck by God, and afflicted : he was wounded for our iniquities, and bruised for our sins. All we like sheep were gone astray—and the Lord laid on him the iniquity of us all. He was offered, because it was his own will. And it was his own will ; because he loved us, and desired to transfer upon himself the punishment due to us, that he might deliver us from the wrath to come, and open to us the fountains of mercy, grace, and life. This was an *effectual* love indeed. Does our love for him shew itself by the like effects ? Are we willing to renounce our own wills, to mortify our inclinations and passions ; to suffer, and to bear our crosses for him ? A generous lover is as willing to be with him on Mount Calvary, as on Mount Thabor : is this our disposition ?

Consider 3dly, how *disinterested* is the love that Christ shews us in his passion. He loves us without any merit on our side : we deserved nothing from him but hell. He loves us without any prospect of gain to himself from us, or any return that we can make to him : we can give him nothing but what he must first give us : we can offer him no good thing but what his love has purchased for us : we can have nothing but what is his. He stands in no need at all of us, or our goods. O how truly generous is this love of our Redeemer in his passion. How bountiful is he to us ! He makes over to us the infinite treasures of his merits : he wants them not for himself, but bequeathes them all to us. His love for us knows no bounds. It hath possessed his heart from the first instant of his conception. It burned.

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there for every moment of his life; it carried him through all his sufferings, even to death. It is without beginning or end; it endures from eternity to eternity. O bright fire, mayest thou take possession of my soul, for time and eternity!

Conclude, since thou canst make no better return, to offer at least daily thy heart with all its affections, to thy loving Saviour. But that it may be worthy of his acceptance, beg that he would cleanse it by his precious blood, and inflame it with his love.

Saturday after the third Sunday in Lent.

On the sufferings of our Saviour before his Passion.

CONSIDER first, how true that is, of the devout author of the Following of Christ: *The whole Life of Christ was a cross and a martyrdom.* He came into this world to be a victim for our sins; and from the first instant of his conception in his mother's womb, he offered himself to all the sufferings he was to undergo in life and death. Hear how he then addresses himself to his Father, *Ps. xxxix. 7, 8. Sacrifice and oblation thou didst not desire: but thou hast pierced ears for me. Burnt-offering and sin-offering thou didst not require: then said I, behold I come. In the head of the book it is written of me, that I should do thy will: O my God, I have desired it, and thy law in the midst of my heart.* And what was this will, and this law, which from his first conception he embraced in the midst of his heart? But that instead of all other sacrifices, he should become himself both our Priest and Victim, and thro' his sufferings should mediate our peace, and reconcile us to his Father. Thus he accepted beforehand all that he was afterwards to endure; and by the clear and distinct foresight which he had all along, of his whole passion, suffered in some measure all his life-time, what afterwards he endured at his death. O how early did my Jesus embrace his cross for the love of me! O how early did I prefer my pleasures before his love.

Consider 2dly, diverse other sufferings, which our Lord went through in the course of his mortal life. His nine months confinement in his mother's womb; most sensible to him, who from his first conception had the perfect use of reason: and who, by a violence which he offered to his zeal and love, was kept so long from action. The hardships he endured at his birth, from the rigour of the season, and the poverty of his accommodations; his circumcision; his flight into Egypt; the sense that he had of the murder of the Innocents; the austerity of his life; his frequent hunger, thirst, and want of necessaries; his labours and fatigues. But all this was nothing to what his boundless charity, and his zeal for the honour of his Father and the salvation of souls, made him continually suffer from the sight and knowledge of the sins of men. He had all the sins of the world always before his eyes, for the whole time of his life, with all their enormity, and opposition to the infinite majesty and sanctity of God, and his divine honour and glory; and the dreadful havoc they did and would make in the souls of men, with all the dismal consequences of them, both in time and eternity: and this sight, which was always present to him, was infinitely more grievous to his soul, than the very pangs of death. For if St. Paul had such a sense of the evil of sin, as to be quite on fire when he saw any one fall into sin, *2 Cor. xi. 29.* how much more did this fire devour our Saviour?

Consider 3dly, how much our Lord suffered from being obliged to live and converse amongst men, whose manners were so widely different from, and so infinitely opposite to his: how sensibly he was touched with the crying disorders of the people of the Jews, amongst whom he lived; with their malice, their violences, their injustices, their deceits, their blasphemies, and the licentiousness of their lives: the pride, ambition, covetousness, and hypocrisy of their priests, scribes, and Pharisees; the oppressions of the poor, their contempt of virtue and of truth,

and their general forgetfulness of God and their salvation. Add to this, how sensibly he must have been afflicted with the hardness of their hearts, with which they resisted his graces; their obstinacy in their evil ways; their ingratitude; the opposition they made to his heavenly gospel; their blasphemous judgments of his person and miracles; their slanders and murmurings against him, and their continually laying snares for him, and persecuting him even unto death. O who can sufficiently apprehend how much our Saviour's soul was affected with all these evils; with this reception and treatment he met with from his chosen people; and with those dreadful judgments they were thereby drawing down upon their own heads, instead of that mercy, which he came to purchase for them by his blood! Death itself was not so sensible to him.

Conclude, if thou wouldst be a true disciple of Jesus Christ, to conform thyself to a life of crosses and sufferings: thus shalt thou wear his livery, and shalt be entitled to a share in his heavenly kingdom. *If we suffer with him, we shall reign with him.* Yet so, if we suffer with his spirit.

Fourth Sunday in Lent.

On our Saviour's going to Prayer in the Garden.

CONSIDER first, that our Saviour's passion began the night before his death: when, after having eaten the paschal lamb with his disciples, humbly washed their feet, instituted the great passover of the new covenant, and given them, in an admirable sacrament of his love, his own most precious body and blood, he went out with them to Mount Olivet, the place to which he was accustomed to resort, after the preaching and labours of the day, to spend the evening, if not the whole night, in prayer. Hither he went, on this his last night, to prepare himself for his passion by prayer; not for any need he had of it for himself; but to give us an example, and for our instruction. O learn, my soul, by this great

example, how thou art to arm thyself against all trials and temptations ! Learn from whence all thy strength is to come, in the time of battle. Give ear to what our Lord said to his disciples upon this occasion, *Matt. xxvi. 41. Watch ye, and pray, that ye enter not into temptation ; the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.* O take heed, lest if thou sleep, as Peter did, when thou shouldst pray, thou deny thy Lord, when thou comest to the trial !

Consider 2dly, how our Saviour began to disclose to his disciples the mortal anguish, fear, and sadness which he then suffered in his soul. *My soul*, saith he, *is sorrowful, even unto death* : that is to say, with a sadness, which is capable of even now taking away my life, if I did not, by miracle, support myself for enduring the other torments of my passion. Sweet Jesus, what can be the reason of this ! Didst thou not, from the first instant of life, accept of, and embrace, in the midst of thy heart, all that thou art now going to suffer ; forasmuch as it would be for the glory of thy Father, and the redemption of man ? Hadst thou not even a longing desire of accomplishing this great sacrifice of our redemption ! And how comes it that thou art now thus oppressed with sadness and anguish ? Where is that courage and fortitude, which thou hast imparted to thy martyrs ; which has even made tender maids despise the worst of torments, when they endured them for the love of thee ? And shalt thou, who art the strength of martyrs, shrink at the fear of death ? But O ! I very well understand, that it is by thy own choice thou hast condescended to all this sadness, fear, and anguish ; it is to the end that thou mightest suffer the more for me, and engage me to love thee the more ; it is, that thou mightest teach me how to behave under all my interior anguishes and afflictions, and how to endure them, for the love of thee !

Consider 3dly, the prayer our Saviour made on this occasion ; that if it were agreeable to the will of his Father, the bitter cup might pass away from

him. But O with what fervour did he pray? *With a strong cry and tears*, Heb. v. 7. With what reverence and humility? Lying prostrate upon the ground, *Matt. xxvi. 39.* With what earnestness and perseverance? Continuing a long time in prayer; and repeating again and again the same supplication. Learn, my soul, to imitate him: under all thy distresses betake thyself to prayer; but see thou pray as thy Lord did, with fervour, humility, and perseverance: see thou pray with the like resignation! *Not my will but thine be done.* Remember that in thy prayers thou art not to seek thy own pleasure or comfort, but the holy will of God: O make this holy will thy comfort and pleasure, and thy prayer will be always accepted. *Stay you here, and watch with me*, said our Lord to his disciples: but at every time that he came to them, he found them still asleep; and no help or comfort had he from their company, in this his desolate condition. O, my soul, do thou at least pity thy Saviour under all this anguish and desolation: do thou stay and watch with him, by a frequent meditation on his sufferings.

Conclude never to forget what thy Saviour suffered for thee in his soul, during his prayer in the garden. No sufferings can be greater than such as immediately affect the soul. St. Teresa did not let a night pass, from her very childhood, without reflecting, before she fell asleep, on our Saviour's sufferings in that part of his passion: and, by this means, she gradually arrived at the perfection of mental prayer, and of all holiness. Do thou the like.

Monday fourth Week in Lent.

On our Saviour's Agony and bloody Sweat.

CONSIDER first, what pangs, what anguish, what floods of sorrow, overwhelmed the soul of our dear Redeemer, during his prayer in this his last night. Alas! no tongue can sufficiently express, nor heart conceive them! However, that thou mayest make some sort of judgment of them, from their

effects, consider how they cast him into a mortal agony; how they forced from all his body a wonderful sweat of blood, which not only imbrued all his garments, but also trickled down from his body upon the ground, on which he lay prostrate in prayer. O how inconceivable a torture must he have endured in his interior! when the pangs of his soul had such a strong operation exteriorly, and produced such strange effects in the body! But why all this agony, dear Lord? Why these pangs? Why this prodigious sweat of blood? Was not the death of the cross sufficient for our redemption? Why then these anticipated sorrows? Thy love alone can account for them. O blessed be thy infinite charity!

Consider 2dly, how bitter were the ingredients of this chalice, which our Saviour so much dreaded to drink. Ah! my soul, they were bitter indeed: he had at this time before his eyes a most lively apprehension, a most clear and express representation of all and every particular injury and indignity, stripe and torment, that he was afterwards successively to endure, in the whole course of his passion, now all at once assailing his soul, and making him feel before-hand all the sorrows which afterwards only came one by one. But what was more terrible to our Saviour, was the clear sight, and lively sense he had then of all the sins and abominations of the whole world, from the first to the last, with all their filthiness and horror, all now laid upon him, as if they were his own; and himself, like the *emissary goat*, (Levit. xvi. 21.) charged with all the maledictions due to them, and with the wrath of his Father, justly enkindled by them. Sweet Jesus, any one of these monsters is more odious to thee than hell. And how then must thou be affected, when thou not only hast before thy eyes this infinite number of millions of millions of these odious monsters, mortal enemies of thy Father, mustered up all against thee; but also feelest their enormous weight laid upon thy shoulders? O what a share had my sins

in this tragical scene; how did they oppress the soul of my Redeemer! how did they force from him this shower of blood, as if all the pores of his body were turned into eyes, to weep for my sins! O let thy agony and bloody sweat teach me effectually how heinous my sins are in thy eyes, and in what manner I ought to bewail them!

Consider 3dly, another bitter ingredient of that cup of the Redeemer, which was the foresight he then had of the little sense the greatest part even of Christians would have of his sufferings; of their ingratitude for his infinite charity; of their abuse of all those graces he was going to purchase for them with the last drop of his blood; of their perverseness in taking occasion from his very passion to sin more freely, and to draw down the more dreadful judgments upon their own heads: and, in fine, of the eternal loss of innumerable souls, who, notwithstanding all his sufferings, through their obstinacy in sin, and final impenitence, would incur the second and everlasting death. Consider that every one of these poor souls was more dear to Christ than his own life, since he parted with his life to save them. What a cruel anguish then must it have been to his tender and charitable heart, to see so many of them blindly and wilfully running into the bottomless pit of endless and irremediable evils, and plunging themselves for ever into the flames of hell. No wonder, after this, that so many lamentable objects, presenting themselves at once before the eyes of his soul, and joined with all those mentioned in the foregoing consideration, should cast him into a mortal agony and bloody sweat.

Conclude to admire and adore the wondrous ways of God, in bringing about the redemption of man. Embrace, with all the affections of thy heart, the infinite charity of thy Redeemer, which shines forth so bright in this mystery. And see thou be no longer one of that unhappy number, who repay all his mercy and love with sin and ingratitude.

Tuesday fourth Week in Lent.

On the Treason of Judas.

CONSIDER first, how sensible an affliction it was to our Lord to be betrayed and sold by one of his own apostles, into the hands of those that sought his life. Inasmuch that he, who bore in silence all the insolencies of the Jewish rabble, and the pagan soldiers; he, who suffered the whips, thorns, and nails, without complaint, could not but complain of this treachery, ingratitude, and perfidiousness of a false friend; both in his words to his disciples, the night before his passion, and to the traitor himself, when he offered him the treacherous kiss; and long before by the royal prophet. Hear how he expresses himself in the psalms. *Even the man of my peace* (the friend whom I had taken into my bosom), *in whom I trusted, who ate my bread* (even the bread of life) *hath greatly supplanted me*, Ps. xi. 10.: and again, *If my enemy had reviled me, I would willingly have borne with it; and if he that hated me had spoken great things against me, I would perhaps have hid myself from him: but thou, a man of one mind, my guide, and my familiar, who didst take sweet meats together with me* (even the sacred body and blood of thy Redeemer), *in the house of God we walked with consent*, Ps. liv. 13, 14. Yes, I had associated thee to the communion of all my goods and graces in my church; I had admitted thee to be one of my individual companions, a witness of all my doctrine and miracles, and even one of my twelve apostles. And that thou, so highly favoured, without any merit of thine, should be thus ungrateful, thus false and perfidious, as without any injury or provocation, for a petty, trifling interest to betray me into the hands of my enemies, and to join thyself with them to persecute me unto death. O this it is that afflicts my soul! and the more insupportably, because, in betraying and selling me, thou betrayest and sellest thy own soul (which is so dear to me), to be an

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eternal prey to devils. O take care, my soul, thou never imitate the traitor! O, dear Jesus, be thou my keeper, or else I shall also both betray myself and thee. Alas! how often have I betrayed thee already, by wilful sin? O never suffer me to be so miserable any more!

Consider 2dly, what an aggravation it was to the injury which the traitor offered to our Redeemer, that he should set no greater value on him; but sell him at so low a rate as thirty pieces of silver, the price, it is likely, of the meanest slave: and that he should prefer such a trifling consideration before his Lord and his God, who made both him and all things; and who set such a value upon his soul, as to employ his whole life and death, and give his own most precious blood to redeem it. My soul, dost thou not loudly condemn and detest this monstrous treason? But hast thou never been guilty of the like or worse? Hast thou never sold, for a more trifling consideration, the grace and friendship of thy Redeemer? Hast thou never preferred, before him, a petty interest, a filthy pleasure, a punction of honour, or the gratifying some unreasonable passion? And what was all this but selling both thy God and thy own soul, for something of less value than the traitor's thirty pieces of silver? Alas! it is what thou hast been guilty of as often as thou hast committed mortal sin. Be confounded, repent, and amend.

Consider 3dly, and see, in this example of Judas, that no state of life, or calling, how holy soever, can secure us from danger; since an apostle, called by Christ, and trained up in his school, so well instructed by his heavenly doctrine, and great examples, and empowered by him to cast out devils, and work wonderful miracles, is fallen nevertheless, and fallen so as to rise no more, even into the bottomless pit. O! let him that stands be sensible upon what slippery ground he stands, and by whose grace he is supported and kept from falling; that so, by distrusting entirely in himself, and placing his whole

confidence in God, he may work out his salvation with fear and trembling. But what was it that brought Judas to this enormous treason? It was the love of money. This was his predominant passion. This he indulged at first in lesser injustices, by the opportunity of carrying the common purse: and thus, whilst he took no care to mortify his evil inclinations, by degrees they gained ground upon him, till they introduced Satan into the full possession of his soul; and so prevailed upon him to betray and to sell his master, and then to hang himself in despair. Christians, beware of your passions, stifle them betimes; lest they grow headstrong, by being neglected in the beginning. Especially take care of that cheating vice of the love of money, the source of innumerable evils; and yet the poison works so insensibly, that few or none are willing to think themselves infected with it. Alas! how many pretexts and pretences are made use of to cloak the evil; how many ways of palliating even frauds, injustices, usuries, and what not. And how ingenious are men, where their interest is concerned, to persuade themselves that their *way is right, the latter end of which* (as they will find to their cost, when it is too late) *leads to the second death.*

Conclude to mistrust thyself, and thy own judgment, in all cases, where thy worldly honour, interest, or pleasure is concerned; because it is natural, on these occasions, to be biassed to that side of the question that is most agreeable to self-love. O how hard it is to be an impartial judge in one's own case! but O how happy then are they, that, in simplicity of heart, seek God, and his holy will and law, on all occasions; and do not desire to bend down the law of God to their will, but their will to the law of God!

Wednesday fourth Week in Lent.

On the Apprehension of our Lord.

CONSIDER first, how our Saviour, rising up from the ground, where he had lain prostrate in prayer, all imbrued in his own blood, which he shed during his anguish and agony, goes for the third time to his disciples, whom he had desired to pray, and to watch with him; but alas he finds them still asleep. So little comfort did they afford their Lord in his distress! O, my soul, has not this been often thy case, to be unconcernedly sleeping, when it behoved thee to be watching and praying with thy Saviour? And what has been the consequence of this? Why thou hast run away, and hast abandoned him in the time of trial and temptation. But now, by this time, the traitor, who was not asleep, has conducted to the place a multitude, headed by some of the priests and Pharisees, and armed with swords and clubs, to apprehend our Lord. See, my soul, how thy Saviour goes forth to meet them; how ready he is to suffer; how willing to deliver himself up for the love of thee: see in what manner he receives the traitor's kiss; *my friend*, says he, *to what end art thou come hither?* Reflect what thou art about, and repent whilst thou hast time; and I will shew thee mercy: *Judas wilt thou betray the Son of man with a kiss?* O the meekness and charity of our Redeemer; who is ready to receive with open arms even Judas himself, if his hardened heart had not been proof against all the charms of his mercy! Sinners, see what an encouragement we have to run to him for mercy, since he was desirous to shew it even to the traitor himself.

Consider 2dly, how our Lord was pleased, on this occasion, to manifest his power; by casting down to the ground all that armed multitude that were come to apprehend him, with these only words, *I am he*: to shew the world that no power of man could apprehend him, but by his own will and con-

sent; in consequence of his own free love: O blessed be that free love for evermore! On the same occasion, when Malchus, a servant of the high priest, more busy than the rest in apprehending our Saviour, had his ear cut off by the sword of Peter, our Lord not only restrained this apostle from using any further violence in his defence; but instantly shewed both his power and his goodness, in healing the wretch, and restoring his ear upon the spot, by his only word: to teach us, by his example, to overcome evil with good. Then after having meekly expostulated with the priests and the Pharisees, for their coming out in this manner in the night, with an armed mob, to take him, as if he had been some highway robber, he gave them leave to use their pleasure with him; but this upon condition, that they should not meddle with any of his disciples. So solicitous was our dear Redeemer that none of his little ones should suffer any thing upon his occasion, whilst he was going to offer up himself in sacrifice for the love of them.

Consider 3dly, that our Lord had no sooner delivered himself up, with these words, *This is your hour, and the power of darkness*, but they immediately rush in upon him; and, as we may presume from the rest of their carriage, and from their hatred to him, load him with injuries and blasphemies. Then they bind him fast, as if he were some notorious criminal: and drag him violently along with them in the dark, through thick and thin, into the city. See, my soul, and contemplate the meekness, patience, and silence of the Lamb of God, under all these outrages: accompany him in spirit upon this occasion (for his apostles have all left him in the hands of his enemies); and strive to enter into his interior, and to learn from the secret conversation he has all the while with his Father; from the prayer he is there making for his enemies; and from the charity with which he offers up both his present and future sufferings, for thy sins, and for the sins

of the whole world, what ought to be thy dispositions under all the sufferings thou meetest with; what thy interior exercises of devotion; and what thy spirit of charity for them that afflict thee, and persecute thee.

Conclude to follow thy Saviour in spirit through all the different stages of his passion, with a sincere desire to study and learn the great lessons he teaches thee in his sufferings; and withal to make the best return of love thou art able, for the infinite love he has shewn thee, in suffering so much for the love of thee.

Thursday fourth Week in Lent.

On our Lord's being brought before Annas and Caiphas.

CONSIDER first, how the rabble that had apprehended our Saviour, having dragged him into the city with loud shouts and cries, brought him before Annas, one of the chief priests, to give him the pleasure of seeing their prisoner, and of insulting over him. Go in, my soul, with him, and see the Son of God, the judge of the living and the dead, standing with his hands tied behind him, before this insolent Jewish priest. Hear the impertinent questions he puts to him, concerning his disciples and his doctrine: and admire the courage, meekness, and evenness of soul, which thy Saviour shews in his whole comportment on this occasion. See how he suffers even a vile servant, not only to rebuke him in words, for his modest and just answer, but also to strike him on the face before all the company: an affront which, if offered to the meanest of men, would be thought insupportable, by the children of this world: but our great master has taught us, both by word and example, that true courage consists in bearing, and not in revenging injuries. And surely nothing can be more honourable to a Christian than to walk in the footsteps of his king, and to keep his laws.

Consider 2dly, how our Saviour, bound as he was, is hurried away, with the like shouts and insolencies, from Annas to the house of Caiphas the high priest, where the senate, or council was assembled, determined to destroy him right or wrong: and therefore, notwithstanding it was now late at night, they immediately proceed to his trial, and to the examining the witnesses, of whom they had provided a good store, to depose against this innocent Lamb of God. Christians, what shall we most admire on this occasion; the malice of the enemies of our Saviour, and the gross falshoods they impose upon him; or the force of truth, and the wonderful innocence of our Lord, which would not suffer their testimonies to be of any weight against him, even in the judgment of so partial, and so wicked a court. But what is the most admirable of all, is that invincible meekness and patience, that perfect peace and tranquillity of soul, with which our Lord suffered in silence, to hear himself charged by these wicked impostors, with so many false crimes, tending to rob him both of his honour and his life! O surely one must be more than man to be silent on such occasions. Learn at least thou, my soul, from this silence of thy Saviour, not to be so excessively nice with regard to thy honour; and if thou must speak in defence of thy innocence, see thou do it with that calmness and modesty that becomes a disciple of such a master. A noisy and passionate defence will only make thy cause worse; and will rob thee of thy peace, which is a more valuable good than any thing the world can either give or take away.

Consider 3dly, how the high priest, finding that his evidence did not agree in their story, stood up, and adjured our Saviour, by the living God, to tell them if he was indeed the Christ, the Son of God? Our Lord, in reverence to his Father's name, and to give testimony to that capital truth, the great foundation of the Christian religion, which he came to

seal with his blood, immediately answered, that he was; and that hereafter they should see him, sitting on the right hand of God, and coming in the clouds of heaven. Christians, give thanks to your Saviour for this solemn profession of what he was, though standing now in the midst of enemies, determined not to believe him. They rejected and condemned this grand truth, to their own condemnation; do you embrace and adore it for your salvation. Upon this open declaration of his divinity, the high priest rends his garments, and cries out *blasphemy*: and they all, with one voice, condemn him to death. See, my soul, the Saint of Saints, traduced now as a blasphemer; and the author of life judged worthy of death; and this by the whole council of the priests and ancients of his people: and learn thou henceforward not to be so much concerned about the judgment of the world, if it condemns thee wrongfully; what wonder, since it has condemned Christ himself: he was innocence itself, whereas thy sins deserve other kind of punishments than the world can condemn thee to.

Conclude, in opposition to this unjust sentence given against the Lamb of God, to join with all the heavenly spirits, and with all the elect of God, in that solemn canticle, (Apoc. v. 12.) *The Lamb that was slain is worthy to receive power, and divinity, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and benediction.* But learn withal, from his great example, when thou art called to the trial, never to be ashamed of him, nor his truth; though thou wert even to lay down thy life with him, and for him.

Friday fourth Week in Lent.

On our Saviour's Treatment in the House of Caiphas.

CONSIDER first, how this sentence of condemnation was no sooner pronounced against our Lord, than the whole multitude of them began to fall upon him, and to treat him with all kind of outrages, and unheard of barbarity. *They spit in his face and buf-*

fet him. (St. Matt. xxvi. 67.) *They blindfold him, and smite his face, and ask him, saying; Prophecy who it is that struck thee?* (St. Luke xxiii. 64.) They pluck his hair and beard, whilst he with his hands tied behind him, makes no resistance, but, as he tells us (Isai. l. 5, 6.) *gives up his body to them that strike him, and his cheeks to them that pluck them, and turns not away his face from them that rebuke him, and spit upon him.* Not to speak of many other shameful abuses and injuries: so that here he is treated indeed as *a worm and no man: the reproach of men, and the outcast of the people.* Ps. xxi. Here, as the prophet foretold, (Lament. iii. 30.) he is *filled with reproaches.* See, my soul, what the Son of God has willingly submitted to, to save thee from sin and hell. O! embrace that infinite charity of his, which has made him stoop so low that he might take thee up from the dunghill, and place thee with him on his throne. But O! detest thy sins, which have so often buffeted him, and spit in his face.

Consider 2dly, what kind of a night our Saviour passed in the hands of the rabble, after the council was broke up, and the priests and ancients had retired to rest. These brutish men, instigated by the example of their masters, and by those wicked spirits that possessed them, would not suffer our Lord to take any rest, during that last night of his mortal life: but continued acting over and over again the same tragedy, by mocking, beating, and abusing the Lord of Glory, and discharging their filthy phlegm on his sacred face; whilst he had no hand at liberty, nor friend, to ward off any of their blows; not any one so much as to wipe their filthy spittle off from his face, all bruised and quite disfigured with their buffets. Ah! who shall be able to recount one half of what our Saviour suffered that night from these wretches. Besides all the reproaches, slanders, curses, and blasphemies, with which they loaded him, more intolerable than their blows. *Many other things,* says St. Luke, chap.

xxii. 65. *they said against him, blaspheming; while he all the while replied not a word: when he was reviled, he did not revile: when he suffered, he threatened not* (1 Peter ii. 23.), *but delivered himself, not only to him that judged him unjustly, but also to these vile wretches, that so shamefully abused him at their pleasure. Be astonished, O ye heavens, to see your Lord and Maker treated in this outrageous manner, by the vilest of men! But, alas! my soul, they were thy sins that were the chief actors in all this tragedy. O! repent and amend.*

Consider 3dly, and set before thy eyes the image of thy Saviour in the hands of these miscreants: take a view of his face all bruised; his eyes black and blue; his whole countenance disfigured, so that no one of his heavenly features can now be distinguished; his forehead and cheeks defiled with their spittle; his beard plucked; his hair all rent and torn; and his whole person strangely metamorphosed. Then reflect who this is that suffers all this? and for whom? how freely he suffers, all by his own choice? and what lessons he gives thee in his sufferings? and thou wilt find abundant matter for thy meditation. But carry the eyes of thy soul still further, and look into his interior, and see the peace and tranquillity that reigns there, in the midst of all these sufferings; from his perfect conformity to the will of his Father: see how he prays for his enemies: see the joy with which he suffers, in consideration of the greater glory of his Father, and of our salvation, which he is to purchase by all these his sufferings.

Conclude with admiration and love of the infinite charity of thy Redeemer: and a resolution of imitating his patience, his meekness, his humility, and his conformity in all things to his Father's will.

*Saturday fourth Week in Lent.**On Peter's Denial.*

CONSIDER first, that amongst all the sufferings of that last night of our Saviour's life, nothing went so much to his heart as the behaviour of his own apostles: one of them betrayed him; all of them abandoned him; and Peter, the very chiefest of them all, who had been the most favoured by his master, and who upon all occasions had professed the greatest zeal and love for him, thrice denied that he knew him. O, my soul, pity thy Saviour, thus forsaken by all his friends. Hear his complaints: *I looked on my right hand, and beheld, and there was no one that would know me. Flight has perished from me: and there is no one that hath regard to my soul.* (Ps. cxli. 5.) And again: *Friend and neighbour thou hast put away far from me, and my acquaintance because of misery,* (Ps. lxxxvii. 19.) But what was it induced Peter to deny his Lord and Master, who a little while before had drawn his sword to defend him against an armed multitude, and had cut off the ear of the man that offered to lay hands on him; and who had boasted that very night, that though all the rest should forsake him, he would always stick by him; that he was ready to go with him to prison and to death; and that though he were to die for it, he would never deny him? What was it? Alas, the voice of a poor maid, putting the question to him, if he were not one of his disciples? put him in such a terror, that he not only denied, but even swore, and cursed himself if ever he knew the man! Good Jesus! what is man? what is he not capable of, if thou support him not by thy grace? O look well to me, Lord, and stand by me; or else I shall also deny thee.

Consider 2dly, how Peter came to fall so quickly, after such strong resolutions, and so much zeal for his master. Alas! he depended too much upon his resolutions: he did not sufficiently know himself:

he thought himself stronger than his companions, and built too much upon his own strength: and this secret presumption was the chief cause of his fall. Ah! my soul, beware of any confidence in thyself: thou art never nearer falling than when thou seemest to have the strongest resolutions, if thy resolutions are built upon thy own sandy bottom, and not upon the rock, which is Christ. Peter slept, when he was admonished to watch and pray, lest he should fall in the time of temptation: this neglect was another occasion of his sin; by depriving him of that grace which otherwise would have effectually preserved him. See, my soul, if thy frequent falls be not owing to thy neglect of watching and praying. In fine, Peter was too rash in exposing himself to the danger, by going into the company of the enemies of our Saviour, and giving ear to their discourses; which so far influenced him as to make him ashamed of his Master. Beware, lest also the like causes should have the like effects in thee. Beware of bad company, and of all such conversation as may make thee ashamed of Christ, or his maxims; or any ways influence thee to the prejudice of thy soul.

Consider 3dly, in Peter's three denials, how easily one fall draws on another, and generally speaking, a deeper: and learn from hence the necessity of a speedy repentance. Alas! Peter now fallen, as he passed over unregarded the crowing of the cock, so might have continued in his sin, and died in his sin too, had not his loving Redeemer, in the midst of all the outrages he was suffering, cast an eye of pity upon him; and touching his heart at the same time with a strong and efficacious grace, sent him out from the wicked company he was in, to weep bitterly in private for his sins: a practice which he is said ever after to have retained, as often as he heard the cock crowing. Bless thy Lord, my soul, for the mercy he shewed to this apostle. Learn to imitate him, by a ready correspondence with divine grace, when it invites thee to go out from Ba-

bylon, the society of the wicked, and to weep bitterly for thy sins. But O ! content not thyself with short passing acts of repentance, but if thou wouldst be secure, bewail thy sins, like St. Peter, as long as thou livest.

Conclude to be always upon thy guard : and if thou seemest to thyself to stand, take heed lest thou fall. Thou hast not half the strength that Peter had : be not then high-minded, but fear. Humility is thy best security.

Passion Sunday.

On our Lord's being led away to Pilate.

CONSIDER first, how the high priest, and his fellows in iniquity (notwithstanding their late sitting up at night) very early in the morning convene a more numerous assembly of the Sanhedrim, or great council, to carry on and to bring to execution their wicked designs against the Son of God. Alas ! how often are the children of this world more industrious in rising early to wickedness, than the servants of God to advance his glory, and their own eternal salvation ! Here our Lord is again brought before them, and the question is put to him again : *Art thou Christ, the Son of God ?* And upon his answering again in the affirmative, they all renew their former sentence, and declare him worthy of death. But see the depth of the malice of these unhappy men against the Lord of Life ; which will not suffer them to be content, with putting him to death privately ; or with stoning him, as they afterwards did St. Stephen ; or with any other ordinary death ; but they must needs have him die upon a cross ; as being the most disgraceful, and at the same time the most cruel of all deaths : and therefore, as they could not, of their own authority, inflict this kind of death, they determined to deliver him up to Pilate the governor, in order to his being crucified by him. See what envy and malice is capable of, when once it has taken possession of the soul. But remember withal, that

their envy and malice could not make the Son of God suffer any thing more, than what his infinite charity had freely made choice of, to suffer for the love of thee. Blessed be that infinite charity for evermore, which has freely chosen so disgraceful and so cruel a death, for our redemption from sin and hell !

Consider 2dly, the manner of their conducting our Lord to Pilate, through the streets lined with an immense multitude of people, assembled at Jerusalem upon occasion of the paschal solemnity. Hear how they publish, all the way as they go, that now they had found him to be a cheat and a hypocrite ; had discovered all his impostures ; and convicted him, by his own confession, of blasphemy ; and therefore had condemned him to die. See how the people, who a little while before revered him as a prophet, are now all changed in his regard, and join with his enemies. O see what a wretched figure he makes in their hands, after the treatment he had received in the night : see how his enemies take occasion from thence to triumph, and to insult over him ; and how his friends grow cold, and are ashamed of him. O my soul, do thou at least follow thy Lord, with compassion and love, in these his last ways, that he walks for thy redemption : painful and humble ways indeed, and quite opposite to the ways the world is fond of, and distasteful to flesh and blood : but O how wholesome, to all such souls as willingly embrace them, and follow them, in the company of Jesus Christ !

Consider 3dly, how the high priest, and the rest of the council, being come to Pilate's house, made a scruple of going in, for fear of contracting a legal uncleanness, that might disqualify them for partaking of the sacrifices that were offered on that day ; it being the very day of the feast of the Passover, celebrated in memory of their redemption from the bondage of Egypt. And yet, unhappy men, whilst they scruple going into the house of a Gentile, for fear of an uncleanness, that could only reach the

body, they are not afraid of polluting their souls with the most heinous of all crimes, and profaning thereby the greatest of all their solemnities. But what are not men capable of, when they suffer themselves to be hurried away by their passions! But see the wonderful providence of God! whilst they on their part are so bent upon their own wickedness, that no other day will serve their turn, but the very day of their sacrificing the paschal lamb: without thinking, or designing it, they are concurring, as instruments, to bring about the merciful designs of God, for the redemption of the whole world by the sacrifice of the true Paschal Lamb, on that same day, of which their yearly Passover was an illustrious figure.

Conclude to beware of thy passions; which, if indulged, are capable of blinding thee to that degree, as to pervert the greatest good into evil. And on the other side, embrace and love the wonderful ways of divine Providence, which so often draws the greatest good out of the greatest evils.

Monday in Passion Week.

Our Lord is sent from Pilate to Herod.

CONSIDER first, how Pilate going out, to enquire what accusation they brought against our Saviour, these children of iniquity made no scruple of laying many notorious untruths to his charge; such as raising seditions, stirring up the people to rebellion, forbidding tribute to be paid to the emperor, and treasonably giving himself out for the King of the Jews. Under all these wicked slanders, that tended to nothing less than the procuring his condemnation to the worst of deaths, our Lord still shewed the same peace and tranquillity of soul, and still kept silence, to the great astonishment of the governor. Admirable lessons for Christians! to learn to possess their souls at least in patience, if they cannot be wholly silent, under calumnies and detractions; and to learn, that calmness and meekness will be a better

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proof and defence of their innocence, than passion and rage, or returning injury for injury. We see here that Pilate himself, though otherwise a wicked man, was so far from interpreting our Saviour's silence, joined with that tranquillity of soul, for an acknowledgment of his guilt, that he concluded it to be an argument of his innocence: and clearly perceived in the Jews way of acting, that they were carried on by envy and passion, and not by zeal for justice: and therefore, after enquiring of our Lord concerning his being king, and understanding from him, that his *kingdom was not of this world*, and therefore no way prejudicial to Cæsar's authority, he declared himself fully satisfied, and sought to discharge him.

Consider 2dly, how the Jews, still urging to have our Lord condemned, Pilate, to get rid of their importunity, sends him away to Herod, King of Galilee, as one of his subjects, and refers his cause to him. Follow thy Saviour, O my soul, in this new stage, and admire the serenity of his countenance, and the peace of his soul, whilst he is hurried thro' the streets, in the midst of an insulting mob, and loaded with reproaches and injuries. See how he is brought in bonds before that prince, attended by the whole council, who there renew all their false accusations against him: whilst Herod, who is overjoyed to see him, in hopes of being eye-witness of some miracle, puts a thousand idle questions to him. But our Lord is lent still; and neither takes any notice of the falsities laid to his charge by his accusers, nor seeks to gratify the vain curiosity of Herod, or to do any thing that might incline him to set him at liberty. No, my soul, thy Saviour has too great a love for thee, to work a miracle to deliver himself from that death, which he so gladly embraces as the only means to give thee life. Blessed by all creatures be his goodness for ever.

Consider 3dly, how Herod, provoked with our Lord's not consenting to gratify his inclinations of seeing a miracle, revenges himself on him by treating

him with mockery and scorn; exposes him to the scoffs of all his soldiers; and orders him to be cloathed in contempt with a white garment, as with a fool's coat, or as a mock-king: and, in this garb, sends him back again to Pilate, attended as before, with the priests and scribes, and an insulting rabble, taking fresh occasion of abusing him, from his disgraceful habit. See here, my soul, with astonishment, the Eternal Wisdom of the Father treated by the world as a fool; see the great King of heaven and earth abused as a mock king, and an idle pretender to royalty; and learn from hence not to be solicitous about the judgment of the world, nor to repine if they charge thee with folly: for why shouldst thou expect better treatment than thy Lord! O remember that the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God; and that what the world censures as foolishness, is indeed true wisdom. Remember that, *Whosoever will be a friend of this world, becometh an enemy of God*, James iv. 4.

Conclude to adhere to thy Lord, in the midst of all his reproaches and sufferings; to embrace his wisdom, hidden under the fool's coat, which the world hath flung over it; and ever to acknowledge him for the true King of thy heart. O beg that his kingdom may be established there, and the reign of sin be totally abolished.

Tuesday in Passion Week.

Barabbas is preferred before our Lord. He is scourged at the Pillar.

CONSIDER first, how Pilate, seeing our Lord brought back to his tribunal, and the high priest and council still bent upon destroying the innocent, thinks of another way to bring him off, without giving them offence. It was the privilege of the people, to have their choice of a prisoner to be set at liberty, on that day of the paschal solemnity, in memory of their being delivered on that day from the bondage of Egypt. He proposes therefore to their choice our

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Saviour on the one hand, and Barabbas, a notorious malefactor, robber, and murderer, on the other ! making sure that they would rather choose to have our Saviour released to them, in whom neither he nor they could find any crime, than Barabbas, the worst of criminals. O eternal Son of God ! how low dost thou here stoop for my sins, when thou sufferedst thyself to be put in competition with the vilest and most wicked of men ; and to have it put to the votes of the rabble, which of the two is the most deserving of death ! O the unparalleled humility of my Saviour ! O the unparalleled injury here offered to him by Pilate, whilst he pretends to favour him ! But O ! the unparalleled blindness of this unhappy people, who make choice of Barabbas before their Messiah ; and demand, with loud cries, that the former may be released, and the latter crucified. See, my soul, in this wonderful humiliation of thy Lord, how deep, how desperate was the wound of thy pride, which could not be healed but by such and so great humility. Learn henceforward, at least, from him, to be humble of heart, and never to think much, if others, how mean soever, be preferred before thee, since Barabbas was preferred before Christ. Alas ! how often hast thou thyself preferred something worse than Barabbas, even that ugly monster sin, before this Lord of Glory.

Consider 2dly, how the Jews still insisting, in a tumultuous manner, that our Lord should be crucified, Pilate, in hopes of appeasing them by a kind of composition, and so making them relent, orders him to be cruelly scourged : a torment most grievous to our dear Redeemer (who, therefore, on divers occasions, speaking of his passion, takes special notice of it) and at the same time most disgraceful and most ignominious. Look on now, my soul, in spirit, and see in what manner thy Saviour is treated for thee. See how the bloody executioners lay violent hands on the Lamb of God : see how they tear off his cloaths, and expose him, all naked, before a

great multitude, to cold and shame : see how they bind him fast to a stony pillar : see how they discharge upon his sacred back, shoulders, and sides, innumerable stripes, lashes, and scourges : see how his body is all rent, torn, and mangled by their barbarity : see how the blood comes spouting out on all sides. See in his gaping wounds the handy-work of thy sins. O take pity of his mangled flesh ; and let the sight of so much blood, shed for thee, mollify thy heart, and determine thee, from this hour, never any more to scourge him by sin. Run in now, and cast thyself at his feet, and bathe thyself in his precious blood : mingle, at least, some few tears with his sacred gore : and repent from thy heart for the share thou hast had in this scourging of thy Lord.

Consider 3dly, in this scourging of our Saviour, who this is, that is thus barbarously and ignominiously treated? and why he suffers all this? O my soul, it is the God that made thee : it is the Lord and Maker of heaven and earth, who suffers all this by his own free choice, for the love of thee : it is to deliver thee, by his sufferings, from the grievous and eternal torments thy sins have deserved ; and to purchase for thee everlasting joys, which thou never couldst deserve : O infinite love of my God! O never suffer me, dearest Saviour, to forget what thou hast endured for the love of me! But see in what manner our Lord suffers all this barbarous usage! Without resistance ; without complaint, in silence ; with a perfect resignation and conformity to the will of his Father : in perfect charity ; praying for his enemies, whilst they stand by insulting over him, and rejoicing at his torments. My soul, let us study well, and learn these lessons of our suffering Redeemer.

Conclude to make the best acknowledgement thou art able, of the love thy Saviour has shewed thee in his sufferings, by a return of thanksgiving and love ; and by a constant detestation of sin, as his and thy mortal enemy, and the occasion of all his sufferings.

*Wednesday in Passion Week.**Our Lord is crowned with Thorns.*

CONSIDER first, how the barbarous ruffians, being wearied at last with scourging our Lord, untie him from the pillar, all covered with wounds; and with his strength quite exhausted by the loss of so much blood: and now, whilst they rest themselves, they leave him to seek out, and to pick up his cloaths, which they had scattered about, and to put them on as well as he can: for he is so stiff and weak, so mangled by their barbarity, as to be but little able to help himself; and he has no friend at hand to help him. But O, how ill do these rough woollen cloaths suit with his green wounds! how does the rubbing of them, at every step or motion, encrease the smart? But now, behold, my soul, another scene of barbarity, not to be paralleled in all history, acted by these bloody soldiers, in crowning our Lord for a king, by a most cruel mockery; and sporting themselves in his sufferings. To perform this tragical ceremony with more solemnity, they drag our Saviour into the court of the governor's hall, and assemble the whole regiment about him: then they strip him again of all his garments, which now were beginning to stick to his wounds, which they rend, and widen by this violence. See, my soul, how thy Lord now stands, as a lamb in the midst of innumerable wolves: see how, from head to foot, he is imbrued in blood: 'see at how dear a rate he has purchased thy redemption.

Consider 2dly, what a throne, what royal robes, what a crown, what a scepter, these wretches have provided for the Lord of Glory. See, my soul, how they make him sit down on some dirty stool for a throne, and how they throw about him, for his royal robes, an old ragged purple garment, to the great annoyance of his wounded back, shoulders, and arms. After this, they press down on his sacred head a twisted wreath of long, hard, and sharp thorns, for

a royal diadem or crown : then they put into his hand, for a scepter, a reed, or a cane. And having thus arrayed him, they come, and kneel before him, in mockery, to pay him their homage ; saluting him scornfully with a *Hail, King of the Jews* : and then, by turns, they buffet him, spit in his face, and strike him over the head with the scepter they had given him ; and by that means drive the thorns deeper in ; whilst the blood trickles down apace from the numberless wounds which he receives from their points. Ah ! who shall be able to number the multitude and variety of sufferings, which our Lord endured upon this occasion ! in which it is hard to say, whether the torment, or the ignominy and disgrace, was the more intolerable. Yet our dear Lord bore all in patience and silence for the love of us.

Consider 3dly, and take a view at leisure of our Saviour sitting on this stool of ignominy, in the midst of this whole regiment of insolent and barbarous pagan soldiers. Reflect on what he suffers in his sacred head and temples, from those hard sharp thorns, which pierce his flesh with so many wounds. O ! who can conceive the greatness of this torture ! See, my soul, how the blood trickles down his face and neck : see the many bruises he receives from the violent blows they give him with their hands : see his divine countenance covered with the filth they cast upon him : see through the ragged purple all the wounds of his mangled body, bleeding plentifully for thy sins : in fine, see how this lawless insulting multitude strive which shall outdo each other in their scoffs, affronts, and injuries ; whilst our Lord, on his part, still preserves the same serenity in his countenance, the same tranquillity in his soul, and the same charity in his heart. But, O my soul, whilst thou art contemplating him under all these barbarous mockeries and torments ; cast thy eyes upwards, and see him sitting on his throne of glory, adored by all the legions of angels : and do thou join with them in paying him the best homage thou

art able: and ever remember, that the more he has debased himself for thee, the more dear he ought to be to thee.

Conclude by acknowledging thy Saviour, in the midst of all these ignominies, for the true King of thy heart; and begging him to come and establish his throne there. Learn from him to bear, and to submit to, the thorns which are appointed for thee, in this thy mortal pilgrimage. O pretend not to a crown of roses; to a life of worldly pleasures; whilst thy Lord makes choice of a crown of thorns, for the love of thee.

Thursday in Passion Week.

Our Lord is shewn to the People, with Ecce Homo, Behold the Man.

CONSIDER first, how Pilate, hoping now that the malice of the Jews would be so far abated, as to insist no longer on our Saviour's death, after they should see in what a barbarous manner he had been treated, in compliance with their passion: leads him out, just as he was, with his crown of thorns upon his head, and his ragged purple on his shoulders; and, from an eminence shews him to the people with these words, *Ecce homo*, Behold the man. As much as to say: Take a view of him now from head to foot, see how he is all covered with wounds, how his whole body is rent, torn, and mangled with scourges, his head and temples pierced with bloody thorns, his face all black and blue, and his person quite disfigured. See how cruelly he has been handled, in complaisance to you, though neither I, nor Herod, could find any crime in him. Let then this outrageous treatment he has received from the soldiers, let all this blood he has shed satisfy you; take pity on him now at least, and cease to seek his death. But O! how vain it is to expect that men's passions should be abated by giving way to them! Pilate imagined the sight of so much innocent blood already shed, would extinguish the thirst of the Jews:

whereas it did but increase it, and make them the more eager after our Lord's death. See, my soul, thou never suffer thyself to be imposed upon in the like manner, by thinking to rid thyself the easier hereafter of thy troublesome temptations or passions, by making a kind of composition, and giving them at present what they crave. The more thou givest them, the more they will demand, and the more they will tyrannize over thee. It is not by yielding, but by fighting resolutely against them, thou art to conquer.

Consider 2dly, my soul, thy Saviour presenting himself to thee on this occasion, with all his wounds, and all the disgraceful attire of his ragged robes, and thorny crown ; with an *Ecce homo*, Behold the man. But see thou look upon him with other eyes than those unhappy miscreants did, who only took occasion from the sight of his sufferings, to cry out more eagerly, *Away with him, away with him, crucify him, crucify him.* O ! behold the man, even the Eternal Word of the Father, made *man* for the love of thee. Behold his head crowned with a wreath of sharp thorns, piercing and entering in on all sides, with excessive pains : behold his face bruised beyond measure, and all covered with blood and spittle : behold, through his ragged purple, the innumerable stripes and wounds of his mangled body. Behold and see to what a condition thy sins and his own infinite charity have reduced the Lord of Glory. Then see and consider what return thou wilt make him for all his sufferings, and for all his love. He desires no other return but that of thy heart ; but then it must be a humble and a contrite heart ; it must be a loving and an obedient heart.

Consider 3dly, the eternal Father presenting his Son to us in his passion, all covered with wounds, and imbrued in his blood, with another *Ecce homo*, Behold the man. Setting before our eyes all that he has suffered out of pure love for us ; representing to us his infinite goodness and mercy, and the heinous-

ness of our sins and ingratitude to him; encouraging us to hope in him; inviting us to love him, and to detest our sins for the love of him; and offering us all good things through him; only desiring that we would cease to persecute him by sin. O give attention, my soul, to this loving voice of thy God, and to all the sufferings of his Son: but, in return, do thou also present him to his Father with the like *Ecce homo*, Behold the man: laying before him all that his Son has endured for thee, in the whole course of his passion; and putting in thy claim to all that mercy, grace, and salvation, which he has purchased for thee, by all these sufferings. In particular, insist upon this one favour to be granted thee, through his passion and death, that thou mayest never more be disloyal to him.

Conclude, by representing all thy miseries and sins to thy Redeemer, and through him, to his Father, with another *Ecce homo*, Behold the man: and begging a redress from him, and through his precious blood, of all thy miseries; and the remission of all thy sins.

Friday in Passion Week.

On the Part the Blessed Virgin bore in her Son's Sufferings.

CONSIDER first, the foresight the Blessed Virgin had of the passion of her Son, from the time that she heard that prophetic prediction addressed to her by holy Simeon, (Luke ii. 34, 35.) that he should *be set for a sign which should be contradicted; and that a sword should pierce her own soul*. Yes, blessed Lady, a sword indeed, far more sharp and penetrating than any earthly steel, which can only pierce the body, and cannot reach the soul; whereas this sword, of more than mortal anguish, which thou sufferest by occasion of the passion of thy Son, inflicts a most bitter, deep, and deadly wound, in the very midst of thy soul. A wound, which began to be inflicted at the time of this pro-

phesy, by the sense which the heavenly Father then gave thee, of what thy Son was to suffer; a wound, which was a most bitter alloy of all those consolations which thou receivedst from the sight, conversation and embraces of thy Jesus; a wound, which thou carriedst about with thee in thy soul, all the time of his mortal life; still growing upon thee as the time of his passion grew nearer, and not healed but by his glorious resurrection. Christians, see how the greatest favourites of heaven, by divine appointment, meet with the greatest crosses, in this mortal pilgrimage. But no wonder: Christ himself was first to suffer, and so to enter into his glory: his blessed mother and all the Saints were to walk in the same road, in order to follow him, and partake in his glorious kingdom. O! think not much if your Lord chooses for you what he chose for himself, for his blessed mother; and for all his elect.

Consider 2dly, how much the affliction and anguish of this blessed Virgin Lady was increased, when the news was brought her of her Son's being betrayed by Judas, apprehended, bound, and dragged away, in that inhuman manner, before the council; and what treatment he had met with there, after being condemned by them: but as the sight usually affects us more than the hearing; so doubtless this blessed mother was oppressed with a far more killing grief, when, on the next morning, she was an eye-witness of all the injuries, outrages, and torments, which he suffered in the different stages of his passion. For as no love, that any person upon earth has ever experienced, could any ways approach to the love she bore our Lord, not only as her Son, but much more as her God: so, in proportion to her love, her anguish, and sorrow, to see him treated in that cruel, barbarous, and outrageous manner, was the greatest that any pure creature could ever sustain; and nothing less than a miracle could support her, or keep her alive, under so dreadful a torture. Ah, Christians! the whips, thorns,

and nails, that pierced his flesh, pierced her heart with unexpressible pain and sorrow, which none surely could ever exceed, but those of her Son, *the Man of sorrows*. O take pity, my soul, on the sorrows of them both, and see thou never more concur to grieve them by sin.

Consider 3dly, more in particular, how the Blessed Virgin was affected when she first saw her Son, in the morning, in the hands of his enemies, all disfigured by their blows, with his hands tied behind him, his face covered with spittle, and his hair all rent and torn. O my soul, even so hard a heart as thine, could scarce bear such a sight as this; much less her tender heart! But what was this in comparison with what she endured when he was so cruelly scourged at the pillar; when he was crowned with piercing thorns, and buffeted by a whole band of soldiers? O what pangs did she suffer when she saw him presented to the people with the *Ecce homo*, Behold the man! How did she then feel in her soul all those wounds she there discovered in his head and body? Nor did she suffer less, but rather much more, when she followed him in his last journey to Mount Calvary, bearing his cross on his mangled shoulders, and marking the way with his sacred blood. But what was all this, if compared with what she endured when she heard the strokes of the hammers driving the nails into his hands and feet; when she saw him hoisted up into the air, and there hanging extended, as upon a rack, and supported by his wounds; when standing near the cross, she saw the extremity of the torture he there endured; contemplated the multitude and variety of his sufferings; heard his last dying words; and saw him give up the ghost? O how truly might she then cry out with the prophet, *O all you that pass by the way, attend and see if there be sorrow like to my sorrow!* (Lament. i. 12.) Learn, my soul, from this queen of sorrows, with what eye thou oughtest to look upon the sufferings of the Son of God, and

how to bewail those sins which have given cause to them.

Conclude to imitate the virtues of which this blessed Lady has given us an illustrious example, in this martyrdom she endured under the cross of her Son : especially learn her courage and fortitude under such bitter sufferings ; her patience and perfect conformity to the will of God ; her lively faith and hope. These must support thee also, under all thy crosses.

Saturday in Passion Week.

Our Lord is condemned to the Cross.

CONSIDER first, how the Jews, perceiving that Pilate was bent upon releasing our Saviour, told him, that if he released that man, he could be no friend of Cæsar (the emperor), for whosoever made himself a king, opposed Cæsar. (St. John xix. 12.) See here, my soul, what evil human respects are capable of producing; and how sad a thing it is either to fear or love any thing more than God. Pilate's resolution in a moment falls to the ground, upon the apprehension of being accused to Cæsar, and of losing his favour: rather than risk this, he is determined to make a sacrifice of his conscience, in condemning the innocent. Alas! have we never had a share in the like guilt? Has not human fear, or the apprehension of what the world would say, too often influenced us to condemn, at least in fact, our Lord and his doctrine, by mortal sin? Has not a much less consideration than the fear of losing the favour of an emperor, prevailed, on these occasions, over our best resolutions? O what hold do we give to the enemy, by these human fears, and by our irregular affections to this cheating world! But see the vain excuses by which men seek to palliate the guilt of their sins, and to salve their conscience: Pilate washes his hands, and cries out; *I am innocent of the blood of this just man: look you to it:* (Matt. xxvi. 24.) as if this ceremony and verbal declaration could clear him, in the sight of the just judge, from the

guilt of concurring to the death of the innocent. But see also, into what dismal extremities unhappy souls cast themselves, when they are once obstinately bent upon sin, in that dreadful sentence which the Jews pronounced against themselves on that occasion: *His blood be upon us, and upon our children.*

Consider 2dly, how Pilate proceeds to give judgment of death against the Lord of life, and sentences our Saviour to the cross, in compliance with the cry of the whole people, still calling out, in a tumultuous manner, *Crucify him, crucify him.* But, O! my soul, reflect that it was the voice of thy crying sins that far more effectually called for the death of the Son of God, than the cry of the Jews; for that tumult could have had no power to bring on his crucifixion, had not he been determined to suffer this kind of death for the expiation of thy sins. But see with what loud huzzas, with what triumph and joy, this sentence is received by the enemies of our Lord, with what sighs and tears, with what grief and anguish, by his friends; and most especially by his blessed mother. But how does this Lamb of God behave on this occasion? In what manner does he receive this sentence of death? He receives it in silence and peace, with perfect submission and conformity to the will of his Father: he receives it even with joy, out of his infinite charity for us, as the only means of our redemption and salvation. See, my soul, whether thou submittest to thy crosses with the like dispositions. Dost thou embrace them as the means of divine appointment to bring thee to heaven?

Consider 3dly, that this sentence of death, pronounced against our Lord, was an act of the highest injustice on the part of Pilate; but highly just on the part of God; in consideration of our sins, which his Son had taken upon himself. And therefore, our Saviour, who was infinitely holy, could not indeed but abhor the crime of Pilate, though he suffered it; but as to the judgment and sentence of his Father,

he embraced it, as being most holy and just: he bowed down, and adored it with all the powers of his soul: to teach us, and all that desire to be his disciples, to distinguish, on the like occasions, when we have any thing to suffer from others, between man's injustice, and God's justice: and to receive our sufferings from what hand soever they come, and how unjustly soever, as highly just from the part of God, punishing us, by these instruments, for our sins.

Conclude with thanksgiving to the infinite charity of the Father, who, for the love of us, spared not his own Son; but gave him up for us all, and sentenced him to die: and to the infinite charity of the Son, for embracing so cordially this sentence of death for the love of us. Make an oblation, in return, of thy whole self, both to the Father and to the Son; and desire henceforward to live only for him, who has delivered himself up to death for the love of thee.

N. B. Palm-Sunday being kept in memory of our Saviour's solemn entry into Jerusalem, five days before his passion; to correspond to the devotion of the day, we shall here insert a meditation upon that subject, and interrupt the course of the considerations on the passion.

Palm Sunday.

On our Lord's triumphant Entrance into Jerusalem.

CONSIDER first, how the time now drawing near when our Saviour was to offer up himself a sacrifice for the sins of the world, he was pleased to come to the place where he was to complete this sacrifice. And as, in order to fulfil the ancient figures, he chose that very night for the institution of the passover of the new law, which was set aside for the immolation of the paschal lamb in the old law; and that very day for the redemption of the world, in which God's people had formerly been redeemed from their Egyptian bondage: so also he was pleased

to make his entry into Jerusalem, in order to his sacrifice, on the very day on which by the appointment of the law (*Exod. xii. 3.*), the lamb was to be brought to town which was to be sacrificed for the passover. Contemplate here, O Christian soul, the greatness of that love and charity for thee, which pushes thy Saviour forward on this occasion: see the joyful readiness with which he goes to offer up himself to death for the love of thee: admire and adore the dispositions of his providence, who was pleased that the glory of his birth should be hidden in the obscurity of a poor stable in little Bethlehem; whilst he chose for the ignominy of his passion, the great theatre of Jerusalem, and the paschal time, when the whole nation of the Jews was assembled thither.

Consider 2dly, the manner in which our Lord was pleased to be received on this day, by a solemn procession of the people, strewing their garments in the way, and bearing branches of palm trees in their hands, to testify his victory over the prince of darkness; and accompanying him with loud acclamations and hosannas of joy, to honour him as their king and Messias. See, my soul, if thou art in proper dispositions to join in this triumphal procession, and with a palm branch in thy hand, to celebrate the victory of thy Lord over death, sin, and hell. Alas! with what face canst thou attend him on this occasion, if thou art still a slave to death, sin, and hell? Reflect also here on the inconstancy of the world, and how little account thou art to make of the esteem and applause of men: when thou seest, how this same people, who on this day received our Lord with these loud hosannas, and acknowledged him for their king and their Saviour, five days after, cried out, *away with him, away with him: crucify him, crucify him.*

Consider 3dly, the dispositions of the soul of our Redeemer, in the midst of these honours and acclamations; and how little he is affected with them. See how, upon this occasion, he weeps over the un-

happy Jerusalem, and over every impenitent soul, that like Jerusalem takes no notice in *this her day, of the things that are for her peace: but lets slip the time of her visitation*, (St. Luke xix. 42, 44.) Learn from his very triumph, his love of poverty, and his meekness, in the manner of his riding into Jerusalem, upon an ass's colt. Give ear to the prophet, (Zach. ix. 9.) *Rejoice—O daughter of Jerusalem: behold thy king will come to thee; the just, and the Saviour: he is poor, and riding on an ass, &c.* O see thou imitate his humility, whilst thou rejoicest in his victory.

Conclude to honour the triumph of thy Saviour, in the best manner thou art able, in the procession of this day. Acknowledge him for the king and Lord of thy heart, and invite him in thither. But see that sin and hell have no place there.

*Monday in Holy Week.**Our Saviour carries his Cross.*

CONSIDER first, how upon Pilate's pronouncing sentence against our Lord, they immediately proceed to execution; and first they strip him of his purple robe, and cloath him again with his own garments; then they bring him the cross, which he was to carry on his shoulders to Mount Calvary, as Isaac formerly did the wood, upon which he was to be offered in sacrifice. But O! who can express or conceive the affection of soul with which our Saviour embraces the cross; which he is now going to consecrate with his precious blood: this cross designed to be the happy instrument of our redemption; the altar of his sacrifice; the throne of his mercy; the trophy of his victory; the eternal monument of his love; the refuge of sinners; the comfort of the afflicted; the glory of his elect; the school of all virtues, and the source of all our good. O, my soul, what are thy sentiments with regard to the cross of Christ? Thou must embrace the cross with him, if thou desirest to reign with him. Give ear to a great

servant of God, expressing his affection to the cross in this pathetic manner. 'I bow down to thee, O precious cross, consecrated by the embraces, and by the blood of Jesus, my Lord, and my king. I look upon thee as the standard of his armies; as the watch tower shewing forth its light, to guide his elect, in this stormy ocean; as the defence of his servants; and as the mark and badge of his children. I adore thee, O hidden wisdom! O light unknown to the world! the honour of them that follow thee, the safety of them that carry thee, the crown of them that embrace thee, the reward of them that love thee, and the salvation of them that cast themselves into thy arms. To die on thee is to live, and to live on thee is to reign. He that loves thee is content; he that desires thee is easy; he that possesses thee is rich. I bow down to thee, O tree of life, the fruit of which is the solid food of the children of God. O balance, ever even, in which alone we discover the just value and true price of all things. In thee is found health and life, the victory over hell, the sweets of Paradise, strength of heart, joy of spirit, perfection of virtue, and assurance of eternal goods, &c. I embrace thee, O holy cross, consecrated by the sweat, and by the blood of my Saviour. Thou shalt be henceforward my refuge, my light, my knowledge, and all my wisdom. Forsake me not, keep not at a distance from me, though this flesh of mine dreads thee, and seeks to fly from thee—O fasten me to the cross with thee, my sweet Jesus, and enlighten me with thy admirable light; that my spirit may penetrate into the depth of the mysteries, and of the wisdom of the cross.' *Sufferings of Jesus*, chap. xlii. My soul, are these thy sentiments.

Consider 2dly, and take a view of the Lamb of God, setting out upon this last, most wearisome, and most painful journey of his mortal life; loaded with the enormous weight of the cross; and with the far more intolerable weight of the sins of the world.

See the length, and whole size of the cross, proportioned to bear the weight of a human body suspended in the air, and reflect how little strength remains in his body, after so many sufferings and fatigues, and the loss of so much blood. Ah! how rough, how hard, how insupportable then, is this load, to his shoulders and back, all mangled, rent, and torn with the whips and scourges! How does it press upon his green wounds, and squeeze out his sacred blood all the way! O mark this his last procession. A crier leads the way publishing his pretended crimes and blasphemies: then follow the soldiers and executioners, with ropes, hammers, nails, &c. and after them goeth, or rather creepeth along, our high priest and victim, all bruised and bloody, and staggering under the burthen of his cross; attended with a thief on each hand; and surrounded with a multitude of his enemies, insulting over him, and loading him with scoffs, reproaches, and curses; whilst the cruel hangmen at every turn, are hastening him forward with their kicks and blows. Follow thy Lord, my soul, in this his last and most painful procession: offer him what service thou canst, to ease him of some part of his burthen: weep over him, at least with the good women that followed him: but take notice of his admonishing them, rather to weep for themselves, and for their children: and see how, in the midst of all his sufferings, he is much more concerned for our miseries and sins, than for any thing he himself endures. O! blessed be his infinite charity for us poor sinners.

Consider 3dly, how our Lord having for some time, with unspeakable labour and torment, carried his cross through the streets, at last falleth down under the enormous weight of it, unable to carry it any longer. But with what a shock does he fall! with what an additional torture to his wounded body; now quite exhausted with pain and labour, and loss of blood! See how the bloody executioners employ their kicks and blows, to oblige him to rise

again with his burthen : but all in vain ; his strength is quite gone : he is not able to carry it any farther. Therefore, lest his execution should be delayed, they lay hold on Simon of Cyrene, whom they met coming out of the country, and they oblige him to take up the cross, and to ease our Lord of part of the burthen, by carrying it after him. But O ! who shall ease him of any part of that other load, infinitely more insupportable, which his heavenly Father has laid upon him, of the sins of the whole world ! My soul, do thou give him what little ease thou canst, by lamenting the share thy sins have in this tragedy, and by ceasing henceforward to afflict him by sin.

Conclude to run in and offer thy service to thy Redeemer on this occasion ; to take up his cross for him, and to help him, like Simon of Cyrene, in the carriage of it : or rather offer thyself to him to take up thy own cross, with perfect resignation and patience, and to follow him. It is this he particularly calls for, and expects at thy hands.

Tuesday in Holy Week.

Our Saviour is nailed to the Cross.

CONSIDER first, how our Lord, being at length arrived at Mount Calvary, quite wearied and spent, the untired malice of his enemies pursuing him still, finds out a new torture for him, by mingling gall with the wine that, according to custom, was presented as a strengthening draught to criminals that were to be executed. Our Lord, that he might suffer the more for us, was pleased by tasting it to embitter his palate, parched up before with a violent thirst ; but he would not admit of the comfort that the drinking of it might have afforded his stomach : *When he had tasted, he would not drink, St. Matt. xxvii. 34.* And now they strip him violently of his cloaths, which by this time began to cleave fast to his mangled body, being pressed into the wounds by the weight of the cross : so that all his wounds

are now opened afresh, and this Lamb of God is in a manner flayed alive, in order to be laid on the altar of the cross. O! my soul, see how he stands, all covered with his blood, with his eyes lifted up to heaven, with infinite charity praying for poor sinners, and even for his very executioners. O! run in now, and cast thyself at his feet, and bathe thyself in that precious blood which he so plentifully sheds for thee: but see thou mingle with it thy penitential tears, in consideration of the share thou hast had, in bringing these sufferings upon him by thy sins.

Consider 2dly, how all things being now ready, they order him to lie down upon the cross. He obeys without resistance or demur, and lays himself down upon this hard bed on which he is to die: this bed of sorrow, on which he is to bring us forth to God. Here he lies, with his eyes fixed on heaven, as high priest of all mankind, offering himself a victim of propitiation for our sins, to his eternal Father; and freely giving up his hands and feet to the executioners, to be pierced with the nails. See, now my soul, how one of these ruffians comes with a large sharp nail, and fixing the point of it upon the sacred palm of one of our Saviour's hands, violently drives it with his hammer into the tender flesh, forcing its way with inconceivable torment through the nerves, sinews, muscles, and bones, of which the hand is composed, deep into the hard wood of the cross. The extremity of pain, which was caused by the violent piercing of so many nerves and bones as meet in the hands, made all the nerves and sinews shrink up, and draw the body towards that hand that was nailed; so that great violence was used by the executioners in dragging the other arm and hand to the opposite side, to the place prepared for it, where they served it in like manner. And then, with equal barbarity, they drew down his sacred feet, and nailed them also to the cross. Verifying that of the prophet, (Ps. xxi.) *They have dug my*

hands and feet: they have numbered all my bones: inasmuch as, by the violence of their pulling, the bones of our Lord were so drawn from their places, and disjoined, that they might be numbered. Ah! sweet Saviour, who can conceive the least part of what thou hast here endured for the love of me?

Consider Sdly, what shocks, what tortures, our Lord, being now nailed to the cross, must have suffered in his whole body, when they dragged the cross along the ground to the hole prepared for it; how much, when they began with ropes to raise him up into the air; how much, when they let the foot of the cross fall with a jolt into the hole; how much, when they fastened it in the ground with large stakes, which they drove in with their mallets. O! who can think, without horror, on the racking pains that every motion or shock of this nature must have caused to a body all disjoined, and supported only by the bones and sinews of the hands and feet, pierced through with gross nails! But though this torture, which our Lord here endured, was so great and insupportable, that one would think it might have moved the hardest heart to compassion to have seen even a brute beast undergo so much: yet such was the insatiable malice of the enemies of our Saviour, that instead of shewing him any pity, or relenting at the sight of his torments, they shout and triumph when they see him appear above the heads of the people; and, drawing nigher, they stand shaking their heads at him, rejoicing at all his sufferings, scoffing, and insulting over him. Christians, whilst you detest this Jewish malice, see you have no share in it, by your obstinacy in sin; *crucifying again to yourselves the Son of God, and making a mockery of him*, Heb. vi. 6.

Conclude, by detesting the handy work of your sins, which have nailed your Saviour to the cross: and by loving him, who out of pure love for you has endured so much. O! that we could here say with the martyr Ignatius, and with the like affection, *My love is fastened to the cross.*

*Wednesday in Holy Week.**On the sufferings of our Saviour upon the Cross.*

CONSIDER first, what our Lord suffers upon the cross, for the whole time that he continues living upon it, till he consummates his sacrifice. Draw near my soul, and sit down under the shadow of thy true lover, with a longing desire to be his scholar in this school of love. Contemplate at leisure the multitude and variety of his sufferings. And first, as to his sacred body ; see how *from the sole of the foot, to the top of the head, there is no soundness therein* : see how it is all covered with wounds and blood. O how rough is this hard bed of the cross to a body all torn and mangled ! O how uneasy is this pillow of a thorny crown to his wounded head ! See all the cruel bruises, with which his divine face is disfigured ; and reflect on the smart and pain of them. See how the whole body is violently stretched, and extended as upon a rack, with an inexpressible torture in all the joints and limbs. But, above all, remark those four streams of blood, those fountains of paradise, that flow from the four most painful wounds of his hands and feet ; and consider how the whole weight of the body, hanging by those gross nails, that pierce the nerves and bones, whilst it naturally sinks downwards, is continually rending and tearing his wounds, and encreasing his pains.

Consider 2dly, what our Saviour suffers interiorly in his soul, and thou shalt find it to be much more insupportable than all he endures in his body. Witness the inexpressible horror he has for the sins of the world, all now lying upon him, and oppressing his soul with their infinite weight : his deep sense of those blasphemies, he hears uttered against the Deity ; and the contempt they shew for his person and his divine truths. Witness the anguish of his soul, to see the hardness, blindness, and reprobation of his once chosen people the Jews ; together with the final impenitence of Judas, and the eternal dam-

nation of so many millions of souls, for whom he is now offering himself in sacrifice; every one of whom he loves more than his own life. Add to this, his grief to see the unspeakable desolation of his blessed mother, and of all his friends; and himself left, without any manner of relief or comfort from any creature whatsoever; and even forsaken by his heavenly Father, and given up to the will and pleasure of his enemies. Ah! Christians, no tortures can be comparable to those of the soul.

Consider 3dly, that, beside these sufferings, both of body and soul, which our Lord endures on the cross for the love of us, he is pleased, moreover, to suffer in all other ways, which any mortal can be liable to in this life. He suffers in his honour, by the disgrace of being hanged between two thieves, and loaded with all kinds of reproaches and affronts: he suffers in his reputation, by outrageous calumnies and impositions: he suffers in his goods, by being stript of his very cloaths (the all he had in this world) and exposed naked to shame and cold: he suffers from all sorts of people; from Jews and Gentiles; great and small; priests and laity; all conspiring, as much as they can, to add to his afflictions. His enemies insult, and triumph over him; his friends are ashamed of him: those whom he had favoured with his miracles, declare against him; his disciples keep at a distance, and are afraid of being involved in his punishments. His eyes see nothing but what may add to his anguish; his ears are entertained with nothing but injuries and blasphemies; his palate is afflicted with a mortal thirst; and his own body, by its weight, is a continual and most grievous torment to him. O sweet Jesus, how dearly hast thou paid for my sins!

Conclude to station thyself at the foot of the cross, and there to contemplate, in the sufferings of thy Saviour, the enormity of thy sins, and the goodness of thy God: that thou mayest there learn, how thou art to detest thy sins, and to love thy God.

*Holy-Thursday.**On our Saviour's preaching from the Cross.*

CONSIDER first, that the whole life and doctrine of Christ was a continual lesson to his followers, to renounce self-love, with its three wretched branches, viz. *the lust of the flesh*, that is, the love of sensual pleasures: *the lust of the eyes*, that is, the love of the perishable goods of this world: and *the pride of life*. These are the unhappy sources of all our evils, which withdraw us from our allegiance to God, and make us exchange the fountain of life for poisonous puddles, that can never satisfy our thirst. These are the foundations of a worldly and sinful life, and the broad road to death and hell. Alas! we love ourselves and our own will more than God; we are ever full of ourselves; sensual, covetous, presumptuous, as if we were something; and we can bear with nothing that opposes or contradicts us. But mark, in particular, my soul, the sermon which the Son of God preaches from the cross; and see how loudly he there condemns, from that pulpit, all the illusions of our self-love, with all the maxims and practices of the world, and the unhappy attachments of worldlings to their carnal and sensual affections. O! remember, that what he suffers is all by his own choice; and this not only to the end that he may expiate our sins, but also in order to undeceive us in the preposterous judgment we make of things; and to teach us to embrace what he embraces, to despise what he despises, and to condemn what he condemns. Learn then, my soul, at the foot of the cross, to overcome thy pride by the great example of the voluntary humiliations of the Son of God; thy love of the world by his voluntary poverty, and by his being stript of all things, and abandoned by all; and thy love of pleasure, by his voluntary sufferings and inexpressible torments.

Consider 2dly, that Jesus Christ, in offering himself upon the cross, a sacrifice to his Father, without

any manner of reserve; and in dying in pure obedience to his heavenly will; preaches another excellent sermon to us, containing the whole perfection of a spiritual life, which consists in giving our whole selves to God, and in being obedient unto death. Yes, Christians, if you desire to be perfect, you must learn of your dying Saviour to make this offering of yourselves without reserve, to his Father, and to your Father: you must join your offering with his, and make it by his hands, that it may be acceptable. You must make it every day, and oftentimes in the day. O! give him then daily your soul and body; give him your understanding, your memory, and your will; give him your whole being, with all that belongs to it, both for time and eternity: and he will give his whole self to you. O happy exchange! Offer yourself then daily to do for him, whatsoever he pleases; to suffer for him, whatsoever he pleases; dedicate yourselves eternally to his love; and resolve to die a thousand deaths, rather than to forfeit in any thing, the obedience you owe to this your Father, Maker, King, and God.

Consider 3dly, the particular lessons, that our Lord also gives us, in his seven last dying words upon the cross. 1. Of *perfect charity* to our enemies; by his praying for his, and excusing them to his Father: *Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.* 2. Of *mercy and compassion* for sinners; by the plenary indulgence he imparts to the penitent thief. *Amen. I say to thee, this day thou shalt be with me in paradise.* 3. Of *duty to our parents*, in his recommending his Virgin Mother to the care of his beloved disciple: and of a *filial devotion* to her, as recommended for a Mother to us all. *Woman, behold thy son — behold thy mother.* 4. Of an earnest *thirst* for the conversion and salvation of all men; by that which he expresses in this word, *I thirst.* 5. Of *fervent prayer* to God under anguish and desolation; by the fervour of his prayer: *My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?* 6. Of *perseverance* to the end,

till we have *consummated*, that is, completely finished, the work for which we came into the world; by that word of his, *It is consummated*. 7. Of committing ourselves, both in life and death, by a *perfect resignation*, into the hands of God, by his great example. *Father, into thy hands I commend my Spirit*. O! let us learn these last lessons of our dying Lord!

Conclude to frequent daily this school of the cross, if thou wouldst learn to be wise indeed. But more especially take care to study well, at the foot of the cross, those two most essential lessons, the renouncing thy own will, and embracing the will of God, by a resolute conformity and obedience, even unto death.

Good-Friday.

On our Saviour's Death upon the Cross.

CONSIDER first, how our Lord, having uttered those last words of his, *Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit*, with a loud and strong voice, leans down his head, in perfect submission to his Father's will, and gives up the ghost, to consummate the great sacrifice of the redemption of the world. Stand astonished, my soul, in the contemplation of this incomprehensible mystery, that Life itself should die, to deliver thee from a second death, and to impart to thee eternal life. O! consider well who this is that hangs here dead before thy eyes! The Word, the Wisdom, the Son of the Eternal God; the Lord of Glory; the King of Kings, the Lord of Lords; the great Creator of heaven and earth. But O how strangely has he here debased himself! how wonderfully is he here metamorphosed for the love of thee! Draw near, however, in spirit, and cast thyself down at the foot of the cross; and there exercise thyself in acts of faith, hope, love, and contrition for thy sins; there pour forth thyself in the sight of thy God, in acts of adoration, praise, and thanksgiving; there make a total oblation of

thyself to thy crucified Saviour, to be his, both in life and death, time and eternity.

Consider 2dly, how our Lord, in the midst of all the ignominies and torments of his passion and death, begins to reign from the cross ; and is even there highly honoured and exalted by his heavenly Father. The title that hangs over his head declares him to be *the King of the Jews*, even their Messiah, of whom the prophets had delivered such wonders. All nature loudly proclaims him her King and her God. The sun withdraws his light, for the whole three hours that he hangs upon the cross ; at his death the whole earth trembles ; the rocks are split ; the monuments are opened ; the dead arise ; the veil of the temple, that hangs before the inward sanctuary, is rent from top to bottom, to shew that the law and its figures, are all now accomplished, and the sanctuary of heaven laid open. See, my soul, how he already begins from the cross to verify what he said, St. John xi. 32. *If I be lifted up from the earth, I will draw all things to myself.* One of the thieves that were crucified with him, is the first that experiences this miraculous attraction, and in an instant is changed into a saint : the centurion, or captain of the soldiers, that assisted at the execution, is the next, and loudly declares him to be the Son of God : and *all the multitude of them that were come together to the sight, and saw the things that were done, return striking their breasts*, St. Luke xxiii. 48. O dear Jesus, let my poor heart share also in this mercy ; look down upon it now from thy cross, which thou hast chosen for the throne of thy mercy and grace ; and be pleased to draw it also to thyself, and to make it wholly thine from henceforth, and for ever.

Consider 3dly, how our Lord, by his death, triumphs over all his enemies. He casts out Satan, the ruler of this wicked world, from his usurped dominions, and binds him up in chains, by greatly abridging all the powers of death, sin, and hell : he judges and condemns the world with all its favourite max-

ims : he exposes and pulls down human pride ; he shews forth the folly of worldly wisdom, and the vanity and deceitfulness of earthly honours, riches, and carnal pleasures, and of all that is not agreeable to his cross ; and he sets up this victorious standard for all nations, as the royal ensign of his kingdom, under which his true soldiers shall ever fight, and triumph over the world, the flesh, and the devil ; till they arrive at the crown of life, which he has purchased for them by his death. But see, my soul, how, in the midst of all his triumphs, he invites, in a particular manner, all poor sinners to his mercy. See how, with his head bowed down towards them, he offers them the kiss of peace : see how his arms are open to receive them : see how all his gaping wounds invite them to come and shelter themselves there from the divine wrath. O let us embrace these his offers of mercy, on this day of mercy !

Conclude to celebrate, on this day, in the best manner thou art able, thy Saviour's victory over sin and hell. Adore him most profoundly under all the ignominy of his cross, acknowledge him for thy King, for the true King of thy heart, and beg that he would henceforward abolish the reign of sin in thee. Embrace with all thy affection the sacred wounds of his passion, and choose them for the place of thy habitation for ever.

*Holy-Saturday.**On our Saviour's Burial.*

CONSIDER first, how, after our Lord had expired upon the cross, one of the soldiers opened his side with a spear, making a wide and deep wound, out of which there presently issued forth blood and water, to wash and cleanse us from all our stains. See, my soul, how the heart of thy Saviour is now laid open for thee. O ! enter into it, in spirit, through this gate : O ! make it thy dwelling-place for evermore. Consider in this mysterious blood

and water, issuing from the side of our Lord, the heavenly sacraments, which issue from his wounds (inasmuch as they have all their virtue from his sacred passion) but especially the sacrament of his body and blood, and that of the sacred laver of baptism. See also here, how our second Adam being now cast into the deep sleep of death, his side is opened, to form from thence his church, designed to be his everlasting bride.

Consider 2dly, how Joseph of Arimathea (who before durst not declare himself a disciple of Christ) having obtained of Pilate leave to take away his body for decent burial, being accompanied with Nicodemus, and joined in this last duty with St. John and other disciples, un-nailed the sacred body, and took it down from the cross. Run in, Christian soul, in spirit, and offer thy service upon this occasion; receive into thy arms the dead corpse of thy Redeemer, and lay it on the sacred lap of his Virgin Mother: and learn from her whole comportment at this melancholy ceremony, the sentiments of a most affectionate devotion towards the passion and death of her Son. Join in embalming thy Saviour's body, and wrapping it up in clean linen, and laying it in a new monument: by learning the exercise of those virtues, which are signified by those aromatical spices and perfumes; and by that clean linen, and new monument. Especially, whenever thou approachest to the body of our Lord in the blessed sacrament, see thou take along with thee the sweet odours of devotion, a pure conscience, and the cleanness of the new man.

Consider 3dly, how our Lord lying now in his monument, verifies that of the Psalmist, Ps. lxxxvii. *I am counted among them that go down to the pit: I am become as a man without help, free among the dead. Like the slain sleeping in the sepulchres, whom thou rememberest no more: and they are cast off from thy hand. They have laid me in the lower pit; in the dark, and in the shadow of death. Thou hast put*

away my acquaintance far from me, &c. Yes, my soul, thy Saviour lies now shut up, in a lonesome monument, in darkness, like one dead for always: and as such is left and forsaken by his living friends and acquaintance. See thou leave him not: but stay with him, and watch at his sepulchre in prayer. Weep there over him; with tears of compassion for his sufferings, of compunction for all thy sins, and of a tender love for his infinite goodness, and his love for thee.

Conclude to keep thyself always near to thy Saviour, by daily meditating on his life and death; and thou mayest confidently hope, that he will always be near thee, both in life and death.

Easter Day.

On the Resurrection of our Lord.

CONSIDER first, how the soul of our Saviour, immediately after his death, descends into the lower parts of the earth, to visit and comfort the spirits of the just, to discharge them from their long confinement, and to change their prison, by his presence, into a paradise of delights. O how happy, how joyful a day was this to all the patriarchs and prophets; when they were first blessed with the sight of him, for whom they had longed for so many ages! How glorious was the sight of his triumph over all the powers of darkness; of his breaking down the strong holds of hell, and giving a plenary indulgence to as many souls as were capable of it, by their having died in the true faith, and in the state of grace. In the mean time, whilst the soul of our Lord is exercising this charity, the blind malice of his enemies suggests to them to make fast his sepulchre, and to guard it with soldiers, under pretence of preventing his disciples from stealing away his body, and then publishing that he was risen from the dead. But O how vain are all the projects of men against the decrees of God! All this industry of theirs only serves to put the resurrection of our Lord

out of all dispute, by rendering it absolutely impossible for his disciples (had their terrors and troubles allowed them so much as the first thought of such an unheard of enterprise) to steal him away, though they had ever so great a desire of it. So true is that of the wise man, Prov. xxi. 30. *There is no wisdom, there is no prudence, there is no counsel against the Lord.*

Consider 2dly, how early in the morning, on Easter Sunday, being the third day, the day appointed for our Lord's resurrection, his soul returns in triumph from the regions below, and entering into his sacred body, imparts to it a new and immortal life; and instead of the winding sheet, in which it had been wrapt up, cloaths it now with all the glorious qualities, decreed for the bodies of the saints, in a supereminent degree, and so brings it forth without resistance, through the monument (though hewed out of a rock, and close covered with a very great stone, fastened down with irons) unperceived by the guards, who were not worthy to see him in this glorious state. Yet that they, and all the world, might know that he was risen indeed, they felt a great earthquake; and an angel visibly descending from heaven, removed the stone that covered the entrance of the monument, and sat down upon it. The sight of this bright messenger of heaven carried with it such a terror, that the guards became like men dead, and, as soon as they were able to recover themselves, ran away into the city, publishing the wonders they had seen, till the chief priests and elders stopt their mouths with a large sum of money. Rejoice thou, my soul, to see thy Saviour thus victorious over all his enemies: and learn from this great example, to bear up with courage under all thou mayest have to suffer from the wickedness of men; trusting in God, that he will one day turn all these thy sufferings to thy greater good.

Consider 3dly, those words of the Psalmist, which are applied by the church, in the office of this day,

to the resurrection of our Lord. *This is the day which the Lord hath made : let us be glad, and rejoice therein,* Ps. cxvii Yes, Christian souls, if you have taken part in the sufferings of your Redeemer, by the affections of compassion and grief, at the sight of all those outrages and torments he endured in the course of his passion : it is just you should rejoice, now the scene is changed, at the sight of his being risen from the dead, victorious over death and hell ; and his being now entered upon a new and everlasting life : so that he can die now no more, nor suffer any more. Rejoice then with a holy joy in the Lord : and join with the church on this day in her repeated alleluias : because your best friend, your true lover, your dear father, your king, your Lord and God, is risen again : and this is the day of his triumph : he is now out of all reach of his enemies, and shall live and reign gloriously for evermore. But see, my soul, whether thou art in proper dispositions to celebrate with this holy joy the resurrection of thy Lord. Hast thou endeavoured to die with him, in order to rise again with him ? Hast thou put off the old man and his deeds ? Hast thou crucified the flesh and its lusts ? Or does not sin still live and reign in thee ? If so, how melancholy a reflection must it be, to think that this monster, for the destruction of which Christ died, should still keep thee under slavery, struggling with the worst of deaths, whilst thou art celebrating the festival of thy Saviour's rising to a new and immortal life !

Conclude, if thou desirest to have a share in the triumphs of thy Redeemer, to imitate his death, by dying to thy sins ; that so thou mayest also imitate his resurrection, and walk henceforward in the newness of life, after the great model given to thee by Jesus Christ.

Easter-Monday.

On the Lessons we are to learn from the Resurrection of Jesus Christ.

CONSIDER first, that according to the doctrine of the apostle, Rom. iv. 25. *Christ was delivered up to death for our sins : and rose again for our justification :* inasmuch as his rising again from the dead, was designed to be the model of our resurrection, from the death of sin to the life of grace. But in what must our resurrection imitate that of Jesus Christ? First, we must imitate him, by rising *verily* and *indeed* ; that is, *truly* and *really* ; and not in appearance only. Alas ! how many, at this time of Easter, pretend to rise again with Christ, by going to confession and communion, according to the custom of Christians at this season : and yet, after all, only deceive themselves, and impose upon others, with false appearances of life, and never rise in effect ? Because they do this great work but by halves : their heart is not changed : they do not effectually renounce their sins : their pretended resurrection is but an empty airy phantom : they are still dead in their sins. See, my soul, that this be never thy case. Ah ! what will it avail thee, to deceive thyself and thy confessor, with these treacherous appearances of a false life, which can only serve to plunge thee deeper into the worst of deaths !

Consider 2dly, that when Christ rose again from the dead, he presently quitted his monument, he left his winding-sheet behind him, and retained nothing at all of death : and from that time he had little conversation with mortals, but only with his heavenly Father : to teach us, that if we would rise with him to the purpose, we must also quit our winding-sheets and monuments, and all the appurtenances of death ; by renouncing bad company, and the dangerous occasions of sin ; by keeping our passions under ; and by breaking the force of all former bad habits, till no symptoms of death remain in us. But

then, in order to walk in this newness of life, we must aim as much as we can to walk with God, by an inward solitude, and a recollection of spirit ; and to have our conversation in heaven, by frequent and fervent prayer. Give ear to the apostle, Coloss. iii. *If you be risen with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is sitting at the right-hand of God ; mind the things that are above ; not the things that are upon earth. For you are dead ; and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ shall appear, who is your life ; then shall you also appear with him in glory.* O that we were always possessed with these sentiments ! O that we could die to all things else, that we might truly live in God, with Christ, and through Christ.

Consider 3dly, that *Christ rising again from the dead, dieth now no more, death shall no more have dominion over him*, Rom. vi. 9. So that, if we would imitate his resurrection, we must also rise in such manner from the death of sin, as to die no more, by returning again any more to our sins : but to reckon ourselves henceforward to be dead to sin, but alive to God, in Jesus Christ our Lord, v. 11. This then, is the great lesson we must learn from the resurrection of Christ : we must rise with him, so as to continue for ever to live with him, and to return no more to the dominion of death. Ah ! Christians, if you be now risen indeed, from the death of sin, to the life of grace, dread a second death, by relapsing into mortal sin, above all other evils that can possibly befall you. O ! remember, that if the devil, who has been now cast out of your soul should take possession of you once more by a relapse, he would bring with him seven other spirits more wicked than himself : and your last state would be worse than the first. St. Matt. xii. 45.

Conclude with a hearty resolution of imitating, in all these particulars, the resurrection of our Lord. But especially take your precautions against return-

ing any more to the death of sin, after rising with Christ to a new life. To prevent so great an evil, be diligent in all your religious duties; be constant and fervent in prayer; flee all dangerous occasions; and keep up in your soul a perpetual horror for that hellish monster sin. O! beg of God daily and hourly, that you may rather die a thousands deaths, than once consent to deadly sin.

Easter-Tuesday.

On our Lord's shewing himself to his Disciples after his Resurrection.

CONSIDER first, the haste that our Lord made to comfort his blessed mother and his afflicted disciples, by manifesting himself to them immediately after his resurrection. As to his blessed mother, though the gospel is silent, we cannot doubt but she was favoured with an early visit; that as she loved him most, and partook more than any other in the sorrows of his passion, so she might also in the joy of his resurrection. Learn, my soul, from hence, that the way for thee also to experience something of the visits and comforts of heaven, is to suffer, and to love. The good women, that went early in the morning to the monument, with their spices and ointments, to perfume the body of our Lord, were likewise favoured, first with a vision of angels, and then with a sight of Christ himself: to teach us, that the true way to find Christ, is to rise early to seek him; to go in quest of him, with the aromatic perfumes of ardent desires and devout affections; and to persevere in the search, without being discouraged with apprehensions of difficulties and oppositions. These holy women were concerned, who should roll away the stone for them from the monument, that they might come at the body of our Lord, for it was exceeding great: but lo, when they came to the place, they found the stone was rolled away to their hands: to teach us, that if we continue con-

stant in our good resolutions, God will remove those difficulties we apprehend, or enable us by his grace to overcome them.

Consider 2dly, the favour our Lord was pleased to shew to penitent sinners at his resurrection; by honouring Magdalen amongst women; and Peter amongst men, with his first visits. Magdalen, from the time of her conversion, had constantly adhered to our Lord: she followed him even to the cross; she attended on him there till he gave up the ghost; she saw his body laid in the monument; and after the repose of the Sabbath-day, she was up before light, and was the first at the monument with her perfumes: when she found him not, she ran to the apostles, to tell them the body was taken away. Peter and John ran to the monument; and finding there the linen cloths without the body, went their way home again: but Magdalen staid, and continued her search, weeping and lamenting, that she could not find him, whom her soul loved! till at length she saw his heavenly messengers, and shortly after himself in person: and was sent by him as an apostle, to carry to the apostles themselves the joyful tidings of his resurrection. O happy tears of love! O happy perseverance! O see, my soul, thou seek thy Lord in the like manner; and thou wilt infallibly find him.

Consider 3dly, that Peter, who, from the time of his fall, had been continually weeping and bitterly bewailing his sins, was the first of the apostles that was favoured with the sight of our Lord, 1 Cor. xv. 5. and Luke xxiv. 34. At the first news, brought by Magdalen, of our Saviour's body being missing, he took the alarm, and ran to the monument; and not finding the body there, went home, believing it had been taken away. But our Lord was pleased to remove this error by manifesting himself to him, and shewing him that body alive, which he had sought among the dead. O what sentiments of confusion and repentance, for his having denied this Lord of

Glory, mixed with a holy joy, at the sight of his being now risen from the dead, filled the soul of this apostle, upon this occasion ? O how did he cast himself at the feet of his Lord, and there confess his crime : and how lovingly was he received to mercy, and favoured upon the spot with a plenary indulgence and absolution ! And not only that ; but to shew the unspeakable bounty of our Lord to repenting sinners, a little while after, when our Lord manifested himself to him again, (*St. John xxi.*) he was pleased to advance him to the supreme pastoral charge over all his flock, by committing to him all his lambs, and all his sheep, and to promise him the glory of *following him*, even to the dying upon a cross for him : all in consequence of that most ardent love, of which he three times required a profession of him, (*Lovest thou me more than these ?*) as it were in opposition to his three denials.

Conclude, whatever thy case may be, and however thou mayest have denied thy Saviour, by word or deed, to return now to him by repentance and love ; and *if thy sins be as red as scarlet, they shall be made as white as snow*, *Isai. i. 18.* Love is the shortest way to the remission of sins, and to all other good.

Easter-Wednesday.

On our Lord's shewing himself to the Disciples going to Emmaus, Luke xxiv.

CONSIDER first, how two of the disciples, going from Jerusalem to a neighbouring town called Emmaus, on the very day of our Lord's resurrection, while they were discoursing together in the way, and making him the subject of their conversation, were also favoured with his presence ; yet in such a manner as not to know him. He overtook them in the way, and joined company ; and after upbraiding them with their slowness of belief, explained to them the scriptures that related to his passion and resurrection, and enkindled in their hearts

the fire of devotion. See, Christians, the great advantage of pious conversation; such especially as has Christ for its subject: it even draws him down from heaven into our company. We may, in some measure, apply it to what our Lord says, *St. Matt. xviii. 20. Where there are two or three gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.* What a pity then, there should be generally so little of God in the conversation of Christians! Alas! how can this forgetfulness of God be reconciled with our loving him? We naturally delight to speak of what we love: for *from the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh*: how then can we flatter ourselves that the love of God is the master of our hearts, when we seldom care to speak of him? Surely this is not the way to engage Christ to be in our company.

Consider 2dly, that our Lord was not known at first by these disciples, because their faith in him was weak and imperfect. See, my soul, if the weakness of thy faith be not also the reason why he does not manifest himself to thee, so as to let thee know him indeed, as the saints have done. St. Gregory takes notice that these disciples were not enlightened, so as to know Christ, whilst they only heard his words; but were quickly enlightened, in the fulfilling of his commandments, by the exercise of hospitality and charity: to teach us, that the way to come at the knowledge of God, and of those truths, which as yet we are ignorant of, is to practise, to the best of our power, what we already know of his heavenly will. These disciples *knew our Lord in the breaking of bread*: to teach us, that there is no better way to come at the perfection of the knowledge and love of God, than a worthy participation of the bread of life in the blessed eucharist.

Consider 3dly, how these disciples took notice, that *their heart was burning within them*; whilst they were in the company of our Lord, and enjoyed his

heavenly conversation, St. Luke xxiv. 32. My soul, dost thou desire to experience something of these sacred flames? Seek them in the company and conversation of Christ. Alas! the reason why thou art so lukewarm, or rather downright cold in thy devotions, is the continual dissipation of thy thoughts at other times, and a habit of indulging vain amusements, which fill thy inward house with such disagreeable company, as keep Christ away from thee, and rob thee of his sweet conversation. O how happy mightest thou be, if, by banishing all these impertinences by a spirit of recollection, thou wouldst endeavour to keep thyself always close to thy Saviour, and, like the ancient saints, to walk with him! A diligence in this would make thee begin to enjoy a heaven upon earth.

Conclude to study well these lessons, which our Lord desires we should learn from his manifestations of himself, after his resurrection. But especially learn to seek always the happiness of his company and conversation in thy own interior: there is the school of divine love.

Easter Thursday.

On our Lord's manifesting himself to all the Apostles, Luke xxiv.—John xx.

CONSIDER first, how, on the evening of the same day of our Lord's resurrection, when the doors were shut, where the disciples were gathered together, for fear of the Jews, our Saviour came in, and stood in the midst of them, and said to them, *Peace be to you*; and then shewed them the wounds of his hands, of his feet, and of his side. Admire the qualities of his glorious body now risen from the dead, which, like a spirit, passes through the doors, and is seen on a sudden in the midst of his disciples; and yet shews itself to be true and palpable flesh, by exhibiting those sacred wounds, to be felt by their hands. See how, on this occasion, he at once both

informs their faith, and inflames their love, by bearing about him those marks of his passion, the most convincing testimonies of his love. My soul, thou hast this same glorious body, with all its endowments, in the blessed sacrament: and though thou neither seest it, nor feelest his wounds with thy bodily senses, thy faith assures thee that he is there; and discovers to the inward eye, both his whole passion endured for the love of thee, and the glory of his resurrection. Let this suffice to enkindle the fire of his love in thy heart: do not desire to see, or to feel his wounds, like Thomas; nor to lodge thy hand in his side, but thy heart. *Blessed are they that have not seen, and have believed, John xx. 29.*

Consider 2dly, how our Lord said again to his disciples: *Peace be to you: as the Father hath sent me, I also send you.* Then breathing upon them, he said, *Receive ye the Holy Ghost: whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them: and whose sins you shall retain, they are retained.* See how ample this authority is, which he here imparts to his apostles, and to their lawful successors; that is, to the pastors of his true church, descending from the apostles: as his heavenly Father sent him, even so he sends them; furnished, as he was, with all spiritual power, and jurisdiction, for the ~~rule of his church~~, and the dispensation of ~~his word~~, and of his sacraments; and ~~commissioned~~ by him, as he was by his Father. Give thanks, my soul, to thy Saviour, for having left, for thy benefit, this ample power and commission with the pastors of his church, and furnished thee by this means with guides, divinely commissioned, and divinely assisted; and given to them the keys that they might open heaven to thee. See thou despise not the ordinance of God, nor proudly resist his commissioners, to thy own condemnation.

Consider 3dly, more in particular, the power of forgiving or retaining sins, here imparted by our Lord to the lawful pastors of his Catholic church. *Receive ye the Holy Ghost*, said he: *whose sins you*

shall forgive, they are forgiven to them: and whose sins you shall retain, they are retained. In these words our Lord was pleased to communicate his divine Spirit, the Holy Ghost, to his disciples, and their successors; in order to make them his delegates in the court of conscience; to sit as judges there; to take cognizance of all spiritual causes; and to pass sentence, either in favour of (penitent) sinners, to loose them from their sins by absolution, or to bind them, as the case should require, by censures, penances, or delay of absolution. Give thanks for this sacred institution, sovereignly wholesome to Christian souls: in which poor sinners, that desire to return to their God, may, by applying to the delegates of Christ, have the sentence of eternal damnation, that stood against them, reversed; and their absolution, pronounced on earth, ratified in heaven; upon the easy conditions of an humble and secret confession, joined with a hearty repentance: and in consequence of such absolution, may be again received, and admitted to the participation of all those goods from which their sins had excluded them.

Conclude to adore, praise, and give thanks to our Lord, for all those blessings he brought with him at his resurrection; and not only imparted to his disciples then living, but entailed upon his church for ever. Particularly acknowledge, and embrace that last legacy, of his perpetual presence with his church, which he bequeathed on the same occasion, in the three last verses of the gospel of St. Matthew, when he said, *All power is given to me in heaven, and in earth. Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, &c. and behold I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world.*

*Easter Friday.**On the Peace of a Christian.*

CONSIDER first, that as our Saviour, the night before his passion, bequeathed his peace to his

disciples, saying, (St. John xiv. 27.) *Peace I leave with you, my peace I give to you*: so also after his resurrection he three times wished them his peace, saying, *Peace be to you*, St. John xx. But what kind of peace is this that he so much inculcates, and so earnestly desires to impart to us? Not the peace which the world pretends to give, which is false and deceitful, like itself: they say peace, *peace, and there is no peace*, Ezek. xiii. 10. But *the peace of God which passeth all understanding*, Philip. iv. 7. A threefold peace; viz. a peace of the soul with God; a peace with every neighbour; and a peace with herself. It is both the duty and the happiness of a Christian to maintain this triple peace. And first, whosoever desires any degree of happiness, either here, or hereafter, must take care to keep an inviolable peace with God, by ever fleeing wilful sin, which is at enmity with God. For how can there be any good for them that are at war with God? *Who hath ever resisted him, and hath had peace?* Job ix. 4. *The wicked are like the raging sea, which cannot rest; and the waves thereof cast up dirt and mire: there is no peace for the wicked, saith the Lord God*, Isai. lviii. 20, 21.

Consider 2dly, that the Christian cannot maintain his *peace* with God, if he does not also *follow peace with all men*, (Heb. xii. 14.) and, as much as lies in him, keep peace with all men, (Rom. xii. 18.) For as no man can love God that does not love his neighbour, (1 St. John iv.) so no man can be at peace with God that breaks peace with his neighbour. It is then another branch, both of the duty, and of the happiness of a Christian, to be at peace with every man; at least as far as lies in him, and in the unfeigned disposition of his soul: to renounce all animosity and rancour; all discord and contention; all malice and envy; and whatsoever else is opposite to fraternal charity: and to learn to *bear*, and to *forbear*, which are the two great means of keeping peace with our neighbours: when, on our parts,

we *forbear* giving them any offence or provocation, either by word or deed; and, at the same time, *bear*, with Christian meekness and charity, with all the offences or provocations we receive at their hands: and strive to overcome them by rendering good for evil. O how amiable is this character of the peaceable Christian! O how much happier is such a soul, than one that is always at war with one neighbour or another; and always in a storm at home in his own interior!

Consider 3dly, that another necessary branch of the Christian's peace is to be at peace within himself; by striving to banish from his own interior whatsoever may disturb the tranquillity of his soul. This inward peace, when it is perfect, is a certain foretaste of heaven; it is a kind of a heaven upon earth. In such souls God is pleased to dwell; of whom the royal prophet sings, (*Ps. lxxv.*) that *his place is in peace, and his abode in Sion*. To come at this happy peace, (besides taking care to keep peace with God, by a clean conscience; and with every neighbour, by concord and charity) we must have our passions mortified; our affections well ordered and regulated; and our desires restrained: we must banish all hurry, and over eagerness; all sadness and melancholy; all scrupulous fears, anxious cares, and uneasiness about the things of the world: and, above all things, and in all things, we must conform ourselves to the holy will of God. Practise these lessons, my soul, and thou wilt be at peace: at least as far as the condition of thy mortal pilgrimage will allow of.

Conclude ever to aim at this threefold peace, with thy God, with thy neighbour, and with thyself: pray daily for it: and whatsoever, fear, affection, or desire, or any other thing whatsoever, offers to disturb thy heart, shut the door against it, as an enemy, as a messenger of Satan, who comes to rob thee of thy treasure, the peace of thy soul.

*Easter Saturday.**On Perseverance in Good.*

CONSIDER first, that every Christian ought, at this time, pursuant to the precept of the church of God, to have made his peace with God, and to have signed and sealed it with a worthy communion. So that it is the business of every Christian, now at least, to begin a new life; and to walk henceforward in the newness of life, even to the end. *Be thou faithful until death, and I will give thee the crown of life*, saith the Lord, *Apoc. ii. 10.* Alas! what will it avail us to have made a good beginning at this time; if, after having been *enlightened, and having tasted the heavenly gift, and been made partakers of the Holy Ghost, &c.* (*Heb. iv. 4.*) we should quickly *fall away*, and return to our former darkness, and to the husks of swine, under the slavery of Satan? Would not our latter condition become worse than the former? That this may never be our case, we must consider upon the means that may effectually preserve us from relapsing into mortal sin; and that may maintain us in the happy state of the grace and love of God. In particular, we must labour to establish in our souls, a horror of the dreadful evil of sin, and of all the dangerous occasions of it; to keep up in ourselves a penitential spirit for what is past; joined with a lively sense of that infinite mercy, that kept us so long out of hell; and so graciously received his prodigal children, when they offered to return to him; and with a firm resolution (which should be renewed every day, and every hour), for no consideration whatsoever, to turn our backs upon him any more by wilful sin. O how happy is that Christian who is ever ready to lay down his life, rather than to return any more to sin!

Consider 2dly, that another great means to persevere in good, is to live by rule and order: to renounce an idle life, as the mother of all evil; and to regulate our time, and all our daily exercises: to be con-

stant in the performance of our devotions, and in frequenting the sacraments; and to take care to do well all that we do. Sanctity, and perfection, does not so much depend upon doing extraordinary actions, as upon doing our ordinary actions extraordinary well: now we shall do them extraordinarily well, if we do them with a pure intention, for the love of God; and if we take care to season them with frequent and fervent aspirations to God. Thus, like the ancient Saints, shall we walk with God, and be perfect. This is the surest way to perseverance.

Consider 3dly, that in order to perseverance in grace, it will be also necessary to set out, and to continue, in a full persuasion and conviction that we have not a more dangerous enemy to our souls, than our own self-love, with all its branches and passions; that the gratifying our own humours, is gratifying a mortal enemy; that we must deny ourselves, renounce ourselves, and hate ourselves in this life, if we would save our souls for eternity. In a word, the mortification of our passions, and the total victory over ourselves, is the sovereign means of perseverance. In order to this, every Christian ought to study well to know himself, and the true state of his own interior; that he may discover what passions are predominant there, and may turn all the forces of his soul against them, till he has quite subdued them. This warfare is one of the most essential duties of every disciple of Jesus Christ: no one shall be crowned by him, that has not fought, and conquered himself. *To him that overcometh, he will give to eat of the tree of life; which is in the Paradise of God, Apoc. ii. 7.*

Conclude, in order to perseverance in good, to practise well all these lessons, and particularly to be earnest with God in prayer, that he may be thy keeper, to keep thee from sin. O beg of God every day, that thou mayest rather die a thousand deaths, than once commit a mortal sin!

*Low Sunday.**On the Sacrament of Baptism.*

CONSIDER first, that we are often put in mind by the church, in the office of this time, of our baptism, to the end we may be rightly sensible of the dignity to which we have been raised by this sacrament, and of the obligations incumbent upon us in consequence of the same. Baptism is to our souls the gate of life, an introduction to all that is good. It is called by the apostle (Tit. iii. 5.), *the laver of regeneration and renovation of the Holy Ghost*; inasmuch as we, who by our natural birth from the old Adam, were born in sin, children of wrath, slaves of Satan, and liable to an eternal damnation, are *cleansed from sin, and sanctified*, in this sacrament, by *the laver of water in the word of life*, (Eph. v. 26.) in virtue of the blood of Christ, here applied to our souls: and by virtue of the same, we receive a new birth, by which we are *regenerated and renewed*, being *born again of water and the Holy Ghost*, (St. John iii. 5.) to a new and everlasting life; and are made children of the living God, and heirs of his eternal kingdom. See, my soul, and admire the riches of the bounty of thy God, poured out in thy favour, in this sacrament. But O! take care never to forfeit these excellent treasures by sin; nor to degenerate from this heavenly birth, by an unworthy conversation.

Consider 2dly, that, by baptism, we are incorporated in Christ, and made living members of his mystical body, which is his church: we are made Christians, brethren of Christ, and temples of his holy Spirit: we who before *were not his people, are now the people of God*, (1 Pet. ii. 10.) *a chosen generation, a kingly priesthood, a holy nation, a purchased people, called out of darkness into the admirable light of Christ*, (v. 9.) We are dedicated, sanctified, and consecrated to God, by this sacrament, to be irrevocably his; eternally devoted to his divine

love. O happy dedication! O, my soul, how little hast thou hitherto reflected on these truths! How little hast thou considered the dignity conferred upon thee in baptism! O remember, that what is once dedicated to God, ought to remain always his; and that it is a sacrilege to profane or violate what is once consecrated to him. See, then, how pure and holy thy whole life ought to be, in consequence of thy being dedicated to God in baptism.

Consider 3dly, that *all who are baptized in Christ Jesus, are baptized in his death: for we are buried together with him by baptism unto death: that as Christ is risen from the dead, by the glory of the Father, so we also may walk in newness of life*, Rom. vi. 3, 4. *Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin may be destroyed, and that we may serve sin no longer*, (v. 6.) so that henceforward, in consequence of our baptism, we must *reckon ourselves dead to sin, but alive to God, in Christ Jesus our Lord*, (v. 11.) and therefore we must not let sin reign in our mortal body, so as to obey the lusts thereof, (v. 12.) But as *Christ rising again from the dead, dies no more, as death shall no more have dominion over him*, (v. 9.) so we must now die no more by sin, sin must no more have dominion over us. For *as many of us as have been baptized in Christ, have put on Christ*, (Gal. iii. 27.) and ought to live so, as to shew forth *the life of Christ, in our mortal flesh*; that we may be able to say with the apostle: *I live, now not I, but Christ liveth in me*, Gal. ii. 20. Christians, compare your lives with these divine lessons: see what they ought to be, by the obligation of your baptism; and see what they have hitherto been; and now, at least, labour in earnest to begin to live, worthily of your calling, and of the glorious name and character of a Christian, and of a child of God.

Conclude to bear always in mind both the dignity to which you have been raised by your baptism, and the obligation of it: and ever to shew forth in your

lives, that you are Christians indeed; by a constant imitation both of the death and resurrection of the Son of God.

Monday after Low Sunday.

On the Covenant of Baptism.

CONSIDER first, that, in baptism, we make a solemn covenant with God, by which he, on his part, adopts us for his children; admits us to all the great and glorious advantages and prerogatives which belong to his children; and gives us an unquestionable right and title to the inheritance of his everlasting kingdom. But then, all this is upon articles; to which we, on our part, bind ourselves by the strongest engagements and vows; which, if we violate, in that moment we forfeit both the dignity of children of God, and all the other excellent treasures we received at our baptism, together with all title, either to the favour, or the kingdom of God. The first of these articles, by which we engage ourselves to God in baptism, is the promise we there make ever to adhere to him, by a firm and constant *faith* of all his divine truths. My soul, hast thou been true to this part of thy covenant? The faith, which thou hast promised, was not a barren speculative belief, like that of those who *make profession of knowing God, but deny him in their works*, Tit. i. But a *faith that worketh by charity*, Gal. v. 6. A faith that sheweth itself by the life: *the just man liveth by faith*. Hath thy faith been such?

Consider 2dly, that another article of our baptismal covenant was to wage a perpetual war with Satan; to renounce him for ever, with all his works of darkness and sin, and all his pomps of worldly pride and vain glory: and to adhere to God by a strict and perpetual allegiance to his divine majesty. My soul, what has thy life hitherto been? Hast thou kept this covenant? Hast thou effectually renounced Satan? Hast thou constantly waged war against that usurper, that cruel tyrant, that mortal

enemy of thy God? Or hast thou not suffered him to take possession of thee again by sin? Hast thou not been, all thy life long, his slave? Have not his works, and his pomps, had a greater share in thy affections, than thy duty and allegiance to thy God? O be confounded at thy past disloyalty, and breach of covenant! O dread the consequences of this perfidiousness! Repent and amend.

Consider 3dly, that in our baptism we also engage ourselves to a strict observance of the whole law, and the commandments of our heavenly Father, our king, and our God: but more especially of the great commandment of *loving him with our whole heart, with our whole soul, with our whole mind, and with our whole strength*; and of *loving our neighbours as ourselves*. For inasmuch as he there adopts us for his children and his heirs, in return, he strictly requires of us the obedience due from children to such a Father; with a love of preference of him before all things else, and a perpetual conformity in all things to his blessed will. See now, my soul, upon how many titles thou belongest to God, and art bound to love him, and to serve him, with all thy powers. Thou art his by creation: he made thee for himself. Thou art his by redemption: the Son of God has purchased thee with his own blood: ah, at how dear a rate! Thou art his by dedication; being consecrated to him in baptism. And thou art his by all the articles of the covenant, then made with him.

Conclude to observe, henceforward at least, these thy baptismal vows: and, since God claims thy whole being upon so many titles, give thyself to him, without reserve, for time and eternity, by perfect obedience, conformity, and love. O beg of him continually, that nothing in life or death may ever be able to separate thee any more from him.

Tuesday after Low Sunday.

On the Ceremonies of Baptism.

CONSIDER first, that the ancient ceremonies, used by the Catholic Church, in administering baptism, are very instructive; inasmuch as they shew forth both the effects of the sacrament in the soul, and the duties incumbent on them that receive it. The person that is to be baptized, is initiated as it were in Christ; by professing his desire of coming to him, by faith, and the observance of the commandments: and then receiving upon his forehead, and upon his breast, the sign of the cross: to signify that the cross and passion of Christ is the source of all our good; that by this sacrament we are dedicated to Christ crucified, and must ever wear his badge, both on our forehead and in our heart. Then the catechumen is seasoned, as it were, for baptism, by a grain of salt, solemnly blessed for that purpose; to signify the *salt* of true wisdom, and that Christian prudence and discretion, which ought to season all we do; as also the seasoning of divine grace, which is to keep the soul from the corruption of sin. Moreover, to make room for the Spirit of God to come and take possession of the soul, and to fix his dwelling there, the devil is cast out by solemn exorcisms, exsufflations, and prayers; and the senses of the soul are opened as it were to God, by the application of the spittle to the ears and nostrils, with the *Ephpheta* pronounced in imitation of our Lord, *Mark* vii. 34. O how great must that grace be, for which the soul is prepared by so many mysterious ceremonies.

Consider 2dly, that, after this, follows the solemn renunciation of Satan, and of all his works, and of all his pomps; as a declaration of an eternal war against this mortal enemy: and then to give us to understand what kind of arms we are to furnish ourselves with for this warfare, we are anointed with consecrated oil, on the breast, and between the shoulders;

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to signify by this outward unction, the inward unction of the Holy Ghost, and of his fortifying grace; here given, to strengthen our *breasts* with heavenly charity, to love, and to keep the divine commandments; and to give force to our *shoulders*, to take up our cross; and to bear, in a Christian manner, all the labours, difficulties, and adversities, of this mortal pilgrimage. To which is added, immediately after baptism, another unction, on the top of the head, with the holy chrism, to signify our being by baptism, incorporated in Christ, the great *anointed* of the Lord, and being solemnly consecrated to God for ever, by the unction of his grace; as all such things, as are anointed with the holy chrism, are by the church dedicated to God for ever. Hence all Christians are called by St. Peter *a kingly priesthood*, from partaking in the dignity of Christ, and being anointed through him with that holy unction, with which God has of old anointed his priests, prophets, kings, and martyrs.

Consider 3dly, that, immediately after baptism, we are also clothed with a white linen garment, which the minister of God gives us with these words: *Receive this white garment, which thou shalt carry without spot or stain, before the judgment seat of our Lord Jesus Christ, that thou mayest have eternal life: Amen.* And then, in allusion to the parable of the virgins, that went forth, with their lamps, to meet the bridegroom, (*St. Matt. xxvi.*) and of the servants, that with their lights in their hands, were ever ready to open the door to their Lord, (*St. Luke xii.*) we receive a lighted taper in our hand with these words: *Receive this burning light; and keep thy baptism so as to be without reproof. Keep the commandments of God, that when the Lord shall come to his nuptials, thou mayest meet him, together with all the Saints, in the heavenly court, and mayest live with him for ever and ever. Amen.* Which ceremonies put us in mind of the strict obligation of leading a holy and innocent life, after baptism: of holding

forth the light of faith in our lamps, to the edification of all men; and keeping them ever burning with the oil of charity and good works, till we meet our Lord in his heavenly kingdom.

Conclude, from the consideration of all these mysterious ceremonies used in baptism, to settle in thy soul a great idea both of the dignity, and of the obligations of a Christian: and to make it the business of thy life to correspond both with the one and the other. But, O take care, above all things, not to stain that robe of innocence by wilful sin.

Wednesday after Low Sunday.

On the Evil of falling from the Grace of Baptism.

CONSIDER first, that how much the greater the dignity is to which we are raised in baptism, and how much the more excellent the advantages are which we there receive; together with the inestimable treasures of baptismal innocence, grace, and sanctity: so much the more dismal is that fall, by which we forfeit, and lose in a moment, all that dignity, with all those advantages and treasures. A dreadful fall indeed! by which the poor soul falls from heaven to hell; from God to the devil; from being a child of God, to be a slave of Satan, and of sin, that is worse than Satan; from being the spouse of Christ, to be the prostitute of unclean spirits; from being the temple of the Holy Ghost, to be the habitation of the wicked one. This abominable tyrant, in the very moment she sins, enters in, and takes possession of her; he robs her at once of all her treasures, of virtue, grace, and merit; of all her share in Jesus Christ, of all her right and title to his kingdom, and of all true peace and joy; and, in exchange for all these good things, he offers her nothing but husks of swine, which cannot satisfy her appetite; nothing but mere toys and fooleries; poisonous baits which delude her with a momentary sweetness, presently followed with a bitter remorse, and a long train of other evils, ending in death and hell.

Consider 2dly, the folly and madness of the soul that consents to such an exchange. Alas! she exchanges all her good at present, and all her title to any good hereafter, either in time or eternity, for a mere bubble, a brutish passion, an irksome slavery, an eternal misery! Ah! unhappy sinner, open thy eyes, and see the wretched bargain thou hast made! see how strangely thou hast been deluded; to part with thy God, and all thy good, for something so base, so vile, so empty, so filthy, so short, so foolish and miserable; accompanied with so much remorse, with so much danger, and with so much falsehood and deceit. Before thy sin, heaven was thine; God himself was thine; but now thou hast parted with thy God; thou hast sold him for a mere nothing; thou art no longer his; thou hast made him thy enemy; thou hast exchanged heaven for hell; thou standest upon the very brink of a miserable eternity; thou art just ready to fall down that dreadful precipice. Can any folly or madness bear the least comparison with this?

Consider 3dly, the enormity of the treason which the soul is guilty of, when she falls from the grace of baptism. She renounces her allegiance to her king and God: she rebels against him to follow Satan: she even drives him from his throne, which he held within her: she expels him out of his temple, to make room for his enemy: she sets up an idol in the house of God, which she worships in contempt of the living God: she violates all her solemn vows: she sacrilegiously profanes the temple consecrated to God: she breaks his holy covenant; she treads under foot the precious blood of his Son; and, as much as lies in her, she crucifies him again. O, my soul, hast thou had no share in all this guilt? Alas! how early didst thou fall from thy baptismal grace into the bottomless pit of sin and misery! how quickly didst thou exchange thy God for Satan! Thou wast strictly bound, in consequence of thy creation, thy redemption, thy baptismal dedication, and the covenant then made in thy name, to turn

thyself to God, as soon as thou wast capable of knowing him, and to consecrate thy whole self to his love and service for evermore: and instead of this, hast thou not, at thy very first coming to the use of reason, like the rebel angels, turned away from thy God, by running after empty toys, and lying follies, preferably to him, and thinking but little or nothing of him?

Conclude, if thy conscience charge thee with this guilt, to bewail for the whole remainder of thy life the loss thou hast sustained, the misery thou hast incurred, the folly and madness, the heinousness, and enormity of this thy fall from God. And, in order to make amends, after the best manner thou art capable of, endeavour now at least, and for every day and hour thou hast yet to come, to make a frequent offering of thy whole self, without reserve, to the love and service of the divine majesty.

Thursday after Low-Sunday.

On the Theological Virtues.

CONSIDER first, that as God is the sovereign spirit, and the sovereign truth, so they that would offer him an acceptable homage must worship him in spirit and in truth, (*John* iv. 24.) by joining with the external adoration, praise, prayer, and sacrifice, which is offered him in the church of Christ, the internal homage of their heart, and the pure worship of the three divine virtues of faith, hope, and love. Where these are duly exercised, all is well: there God is, and all good: but where any one of these is wanting, all goes wrong: nothing else can supply that defect. Embrace then, O my soul, these three virtues, with thy whole heart and affection, and they will bring thee to thy God. There is no other way to heaven and a happy eternity, but by faith, hope, and charity.

Consider 2dly, that these three virtues are called *theological* and *divine*, from the immediate relation they have to God. They flow from him into our souls; and they take our souls along with them to

him. They tend to him as the sovereign object with which they are taken up, and upon which they are wholly employed; and they are entirely grounded on him, and on his divine attributes, as their sole motive and foundation. Thus *faith* believes in him as the sovereign truth, and obliges the soul to bow down, and adore him as such; and to give an undoubted assent to all the truths revealed by him, because he is the sovereign truth, who neither can deceive nor be deceived. Thus *hope* puts her whole trust in him; worships him as the inexhaustible source of all good; and raises the soul to a lively expectation of mercy, grace, and salvation from him; grounding herself upon his almighty power, goodness, promises, and mercy, and the precious blood of his Son. Thus *charity*, or divine *love*, embraces him above all things; worships him, by offering herself and all things else to him; loves him for his own infinite goodness sake, and all others, that are made after his image and likeness, for his sake. Thus these three virtues derive their excellence, which they have above all others, from this immediate relation to the source of all excellence. O, my soul, see thou give them the first place in thy inward house, and continually entertain them there. Make them thy favourites, and they will make thee the favourite of heaven.

Consider *sdly*, that to entertain these divine virtues in the soul, we must make frequent acts of them: otherwise they will quickly fade away and die. The soul that does not often exercise her *faith*, by employing her thoughts upon the great truths of God and eternity, quickly forgets both God and herself; and, by forgetting God and herself, is exposed to all manner of evils. In like manner, where *hope* is not frequently exercised, by the help of prayer and consideration, it quickly degenerates into presumption. And as for *charity*, or *love*, which is in the nature of a fire, that is always active, must needs die away, if it be not maintained, and kept alive, by frequent exercise. As the just man lives by *faith*, according to the scripture, so he must also live by *hope*, and by

charity: so that the whole life of a Christian ought to be continually influenced by these three virtues; which cannot be, without frequent acts of all the three. And this is the shortest and easiest way to all perfection.

Conclude to labour to acquire, and to entertain, these divine virtues, by frequent acts of them; and in order thereunto, to be diligent in the daily exercise of mental prayer. In this school they are best learnt, improved, and brought to perfection.

Friday after Low-Sunday.

On Faith.

CONSIDER first, that *without faith it is impossible to please God*, Heb. xi. 6. This virtue is the ground-work and first foundation of all our good: here we must begin the work of our salvation. But what is faith? Not, as some vainly imagine, a presumptuous confidence of the remission of our sins, and of our justification, and eternal beatitude; excluding that humble fear, with which the Christian is taught to work out his salvation, (*Philip. ii. 12. Rom. xi. 20.*) but a firm belief of all those things that God has any ways revealed or promised; a close adhesion of the soul to all the divine truths, as coming from the eternal truth; a firm assent, a bowing down of the soul to all that God has taught, how much soever above our comprehension or understanding. *Faith*, says the Apostle, (*Heb. xi. 1.*) *is the substance* (that is, the strong foundation) *of things to be hoped for: the evidence of things that are not seen.* These good things we hope for, these truths unseen, are made as it were visible to the soul by faith; she embraces them; she adheres to them, with a strong and undoubted assent; she casts down all proud thoughts and imaginations that raise themselves up against these truths of God; and she directs the whole conduct of her life according to this heavenly rule. This is that divine virtue of faith, to which the apostle gives those great encomiums, *Heb. xi.* This was it

that brought forth so many wonderful fruits in the ancient Saints; and made them the friends and favourites of God.

Consider 2dly, that the merit of faith, which makes it so acceptable to God, consists in this, that it pulls down the pride of man, by captivating his understanding; and obliging it to believe what it cannot see; to adore what it cannot conceive; and to submit to truths it can no ways reach to. Man fell originally from God by a proud affectation of a superior and more excellent knowledge than God was pleased to allow him, and which might make him like to God, (*Gen. iii. 5.*) and therefore it has pleased his Divine Majesty, that the first and most essential step for man to arise from sin, and to return to him, should be the humble assent of divine faith, which makes a sacrifice of what is most dear to our pride, that is, of the liberty, we are so fond of, of thinking as we please in all matters, without restraint or controul; and casts down all the powers of the soul, to worship in the dark truths, generally speaking, most incomprehensible to the understanding, most shocking to the will, and most humbling to the whole man.

Consider 3dly, that the faith which God requires of us, and without which we can neither please him here, nor be happy with him hereafter, must be *catholic*, that is, it must be *universal*: it must extend itself to all revealed truths without exception. For as they all equally come from God, by divine revelation, and are all built upon the same foundation; are all recommended to our belief by the same authority of the church of God, and all supported by those strong testimonies and evidences, by which the Scripture and Christianity itself are supported; it would be calling in question the divine veracity, to dispute the truth of any one article duly proposed by the church; it would be, in effect, the utter loss of all divine faith: because it would be believing by humour, and not by divine authority. Here we may

say with St. James, (chap. ii. 10.) *He that offends in one point, becomes guilty of all*: because he is a rebel against that *truth*, by which they are all delivered. O! never suffer us, dear Lord, to be rebels to thy divine truth; or proudly to oppose our petty reasonings against any part of thy word, or the authority established by thee!

Conclude to lay this strong foundation of faith, if thou hopest to raise a spiritual building within thee, in which God may choose to dwell; and which may entitle thee to an everlasting dwelling with God. To build upon any other foundation is to build upon sand.

Saturday after Low Sunday.

On the Grounds of Faith.

CONSIDER first, that divine faith is grounded always upon God's infallible truth; inasmuch as every assent of divine faith is given by the soul upon the motive of divine revelation: she believes all these truths because God has taught them, who is the truth itself, and who cannot deceive, nor be deceived. Whosoever believes upon any other motive, and not upon the testimony of God, may have an *opinion* indeed of heavenly truths, or a *human faith* concerning them; but falls short of *divine faith*; which wholly builds itself upon God's truth. And therefore *divine faith* carries with it a greater and higher degree of certainty than any human sciences whatsoever: because nothing can be so certain as that truth itself cannot lie; and that what God has taught must needs be true. See then, my soul, what kind of assent God expects thou shouldst yield to all the truths he has revealed: he expects thou shouldst bow thyself down to them, earnestly embrace them, and firmly adhere to them, as most certain and divine.

Consider 2dly, that though the only proper *motive* upon which a Christian believes, with divine faith, the truths of religion, be *divine revelation*, or

the *word* and *testimony* of God, either contained in the Scriptures, or conveyed down by tradition: yet, as this testimony, or revelation, first delivered to the Saints, must come to us recommended by such evidences as may be sufficient to convince us that God has spoken indeed, and has revealed these truths, and does require our assent to them as divine: therefore this sovereign truth has been pleased to set such marks upon all the truths that come from him, and has stamped them in such manner with his broad seal, as may fully satisfy all sincere seekers and lovers of truth, of their coming indeed from his Divine Majesty: so that it would be highly unreasonable for them not to yield to them that assent of faith, which is due to divine truths. Of this nature are all the prophecies and miracles, and other arguments of credibility, upon which the Christian religion is grounded; together with the innumerable tokens of divine favour, which recommend to us that illustrious society of the catholic church of Christ, which bears testimony to the divinity of all these truths.

Consider 3dly, by descending to particulars, some of the many strong and weighty arguments and motives, that give force to the testimony and authority of this church of Christ, considered as an illustrious society, bearing witness to those truths which she delivers, as having received them from God himself. This great and most ancient society is, and has been for 1700 years, spread far and near through all the world: she was foreshewn and foretold long before, by many plain and glorious prophecies: she was established by Christ and his apostles, by signs and wonders, and innumerable miracles, the gift of tongues, and other gifts of the Spirit of God: she was miraculously propagated in a short time throughout the world, in spite of all the opposition of the whole earth and hell: she has been maintained ever since by the blood of millions of martyrs; and by the saintly and miraculous lives of millions of other servants of God, in all ages, and in all nations: she

has been embraced and followed by all the best and wisest of men; and defended by the most godly and learned: she has, in fine, all this time, held forth the light of God to the whole world, by her constantly and fervently preaching all holiness; by the purity and sanctity of her doctrine; and by the efficacy of it in the conversion of innumerable sinners; in the withdrawing thousands of all conditions from the broad way of the world, to a recluse and penitential life; and in inspiring thousands of her children with a desire of wholly dedicating themselves to divine love: so that she has, at all times, and in all places, produced many eminent Saints, whose whole lives have been standing miracles of divine grace, and standing testimonies of the truth of that faith and church which they all professed. These, and many other arguments and motives of credibility, loudly proclaim to all mankind, that the hand of God, and his truth, is, and always has been, with this illustrious society of the church of Christ: and that she is entirely to be credited in the testimony she bears to the divine revelation of all that she proposes as matters of faith.

Conclude with giving thanks to the goodness and all-wise providence of the Almighty, who has not only revealed to his church his heavenly truths, for the healing our souls from all their maladies, and bringing them to the very fountain of health and life, which is with him; but also has given that illustrious authority to her, whom he has made the guardian and depository of his truths, that, if we are sincere in seeking, we cannot well fail of finding both her and them. But then remember, that the faith of divine truths, how infallible soever, will never bring thee to God, except it be a living faith that *works by charity*, in Jesus Christ, *Gal. v. 6.*

Second Sunday after Easter.

On a lively Faith.

CONSIDER first, that the faith, to which the word of God gives such high encomiums, and to which it attributes all the great things that have been done by the ancient saints, is not a *dead faith*, like that of the devils, or of those wretched souls, that are spiritually possessed by the devils, and who have little or no sense of divine truths ; but a *lively and active faith*, that penetrates into the invisible things of God, and makes them familiar to the soul ; that sets them continually before her eyes in their proper light, and gives them a constant influence over every step that is to be taken in her mortal pilgrimage. Such a faith as this is the source of all good to the soul : it keeps her in the remembrance and presence of God ; it teaches her to watch diligently, and to pray fervently ; it encourages her to hope and to love ; it gives her a horror for sin ; it completely arms her against all her spiritual enemies, with a *shield*, that is proof against all their *fiery darts* ; with the *helmet of salvation*, and with *the sword of the spirit*, (which is *the word and truths of God*) which puts to flight all the legions of hell, when employed against them, by a lively belief. But where this lively faith is wanting, all goes to wreck and to ruin. *Lord, do thou encrease our faith*, and make it *lively* : O grant us this true heavenly wisdom, and all good things will come to us along with her, and she will effectually bring us to thee.

Consider 2dly, how true it is, that the want of a *lively faith* is the source of all the evils that over-run Christendom. Look into all conditions of Christians, and see how sin and Satan every where reign ; and how few there are, in comparison, that dedicate themselves in good earnest to what should be their only business. And whence comes all this ? Do not these men all believe there is a God, and an eternity ? Do they not all believe that they were made by

this God, in order to a happy eternity? Do they not believe there is a heaven and a hell; and that living in mortal sin is the broad road to hell? Do they not believe a judgment to come, and an all-seeing eye ever upon them; and that is, one day, to decide their cause according to their works, for life or death everlasting? Surely they believe all this, or they are not Christians. But the misfortune is, that their faith of all these, and such like Christian truths, is lulled asleep, or rather it is quite dead: it has no influence on their lives: it puts little or no restraint upon their passions and lusts. So that, in reality, it is the want of a *lively faith*, that fills the Christian world with all sorts of crimes, and that continually crowds hell with souls.

Consider 3dly, that the Christian must come at this *lively faith*, by desiring, seeking, and heartily praying for it. But the most effectual means for arriving at it, is by serious considerations and daily meditations. The great Christian truths relating to God and eternity are very moving, when they are duly weighed and considered: but they make little or no impression upon worldlings, who live in a perpetual forgetfulness of them. To bring forth a *lively faith* in the soul, they must take deep root there. But how shall they take deep root, if they are not suffered to sink deep into the soul by consideration? Hence the great difference between the good and the bad Christian, the saint and the sinner, is, that the one thinks, and the other does not think: the one keeps his faith alive by frequently meditating on divine truths; the other's faith is dead, and his whole soul is laid waste with utter desolation, because he seldom or never *thinks in his heart*.

Conclude to labour for the acquiring and maintaining this *lively faith*, by praying well, and living well; but more especially by *thinking well*: for, without this, thou wilt have little or no sense of God in thy prayer, and little or no sign of God in thy life.

Monday after the second Sunday.

On Divine Hope.

CONSIDER first, that hope is also a theological, or divine virtue, and is no less necessary than faith to our eternal salvation. As by faith we believe in God, so by hope we put our whole trust in him. Faith builds itself upon God's truth : hope builds itself upon his power, goodness, promises, and mercy. Faith believes all he teaches, as coming from the Sovereign Truth, that cannot deceive, nor be deceived. Hope looks for all good from him, as the inexhausted source of all good, with an assured confidence that he will not fail, on his part, of shewing mercy, giving grace, and imparting salvation to us, through Jesus Christ, if we fail not, on our part, of applying to him in a proper manner, and performing the conditions he requires of us. This divine virtue produces many excellent fruits ; it comforts the soul under all the afflictions of this life ; it supports her under all her labours ; it encourages her to go on with vigour in her mortal pilgrimage ; it raises her above this miserable world and all its toys, and fixes her heart in heaven. It is styled by the apostle, *Heb. vi. 19. The anchor of the soul, sure and firm* (not fastened in the earth, but in heaven) *entering in, even within the veil, to the true sanctuary, where our High Priest Jesus Christ is entered for us ; and there fixed in God himself.* O happy anchor, which keeps our souls ever steady in the midst of all the storms we are liable to, in this boisterous sea of the world ; and by the help of which they are raised up to God !

Consider 2dly, that divine *hope* keeps the golden mean between the two extremes, of *despair* on the one hand, and *presumption* on the other ; both of them reckoned amongst the sins against the Holy Ghost, because of their obstructing, in a particular manner, all the motions and graces of this divine spirit : *despair*, by wholly giving up the cause of God and the soul ; and *presumption*, by rashly ex-

pecting salvation without complying with the necessary conditions, or using the means for it. Despair shuts out the Holy Ghost, by wilfully shutting up the gate of prayer, and excluding all other means of grace; and presumption, by setting up a way to heaven opposite to his divine appointments, and in which his grace will have no share. See, my soul, thou fly these two rocks, both of them infinitely injurious to thy God, and destructive of divine hope. Never give thyself up to despondence, or despair: seeing thou hast so good a God, so rich in mercies towards all that call upon him; who has redeemed thee with the precious blood of his own Son; and who has promised all good, through him, to all such as properly apply for it. But then beware also of the opposite extreme, of presuming upon what he has not promised, or expecting to come to him, by walking in a way that leads from him.

Consider 3dly, that divine *hope*, as well as *faith*, serves very much for the arming the soul for her spiritual warfare, and for the overthrowing of all her enemies: because by the means of this virtue, we are *strengthened in the Lord, and the power of his might*, Eph. vi. 10. we exchange our own weakness for his almighty strength and power: and having our God with us, and for us, we run to the combat with vigour and courage, and fight our way to heaven; in spite not only of flesh and blood, but of all the legions of hell. Yes, my soul, put thy whole trust in God, and thou wilt ever be victorious in all thy conflicts: he never forsakes them that put their whole trust in him. Divine *hope never confoundeth*. It is the *helmet of salvation*, which protects our head against the enemy, by covering it, as it were, with the Divinity itself; whose divine word and honour is engaged to stand by, and defend all such as put their trust in him.

Conclude ever to pray and labour for this divine virtue of hope, the sweet companion of thy pilgrimage, and safeguard in all dangers. She will teach

thee to keep close to God; and will engage him to keep close to thee.

Tuesday after the second Day.

On joining a Distrust in ourselves with Confidence in God.

CONSIDER first, that in order to succeed in the spiritual warfare, an entire distrust in ourselves must go hand in hand with our confidence in God. For if we build, in the least, upon our own strength, we build upon a sandy bottom; and our house will certainly fall, at the first shock of trial or temptation. The wise man builds his house upon a rock, (St. Matt. vii. 24.) and it is proof against all storms and floods: but the foolish man builds his house upon the sand without a foundation; and when the rains fall, and the floods rise, and the winds blow, and beat against that house, it presently falls: and great is the fall thereof. He that entirely trusts in God, and not in himself, is a wise man, and builds upon a rock, which can never fail him. But he that puts the least confidence in himself, is a foolish man; because the bottom he builds upon is mere sand, that cannot support the least weight. *Cursed is the man* (saith the prophet, Jerem. xvii. 5.) *that trusteth in man, and whose heart departeth from the Lord*: which curse falls upon all such as trust in the strength of their own resolutions, or in any power or ability of their own. They perfectly drive away from them the grace of God, by their pride and presumption.

Consider 2dly, that, as God's honour is engaged to stand by them that put their whole trust in him, and to assist them with his most powerful and effectual graces, so he is, in a manner, obliged to oppose and resist all such sacrilegious wretches as would rob him of his glory, by ascribing any good to themselves, or expecting any good from themselves, or from their own strength. And are not all they guilty of this sacrilegious presumption, who, in their undertakings or resolutions, build upon themselves, in-

stead of building upon God; or, at least, divide their confidence between themselves and God, and so would make themselves partners at least in his glory? See, my soul, thou never be guilty of any such extravagance and madness. For what greater madness can there be, than for mere weakness and nothing, a miserable sinful nothing, to presume of itself, and of its own strength! what greater extravagance, than for man to put himself in the place of God, or to attribute to himself what can only be the work of God! Good God, deliver us from any such extravagant madness!

Consider 3dly, that one of the principal reasons, why many Christians, that otherwise seem to be men of good will, make little or no progress in the way of God; and why numbers of others, after repeated confessions, and (as they imagined) strong purposes of renouncing their sinful habits, still return, like dogs to the vomit, by relapsing into the same sins, and too often die in their sins; is because they trust too much to themselves and to their own resolutions; and are not sufficiently divested of all self-confidence. Alas! this evil is a mortal poison, which is apt to creep in imperceptibly, and to lie lurking in the midst of the soul; and to corrupt its very vitals. It makes it barren, with regard to the bringing forth any true fruit to God, either in itself, or in others; and fruitful in nothing but in weeds, that are only fit for the fire. My soul, examine well thyself, and see if this unhappy self-confidence have no share in thy enterprises? Are thy resolutions wholly built upon God's grace; to be sued for, and obtained, by humble prayer? Art thou practically and sensibly convinced of thy own nothing, misery, and sinfulness; and that thou canst not make one step towards God, but inasmuch as he shall help thee? Does no secret opinion of the strength of thy resolutions make thee rashly expose thyself to temptation? O remember thou hast not half that virtue and love of God, which St. Peter had! and yet, alas! a secret confi-

dence in his own resolutions, betrayed him into that grievous crime of denying his Lord:

Conclude so to hope for all good from God, as to be ever mistrustful of thyself: and therefore, as the apostle admonishes, to work out thy salvation with fear and trembling, *Philip. ii. 12.*

Wednesday after the second Sunday.

On the Lord's Prayer.

CONSIDER first, that divine hope cannot lie idle in the soul, nor suffer her to be idle; but exercises the soul in prayer; as the great means of obtaining all the good she hopes for. Now all the good that we are to hope and pray for, is marked out to us by our Lord; and comprised in a very few words, in that excellent prayer which he has taught us, commonly called, *The Lord's Prayer*. Here, in seven short petitions, we pray for all that we are any ways authorized by the word of God to hope for, for ourselves, or for our neighbours; for body, or soul; for time, or eternity. Here we are taught to make acts of all the most necessary virtues, of faith, hope, love of God, conformity to his blessed will, charity for our neighbours, forgiveness of injuries, and repentance for our sins. Here we daily make a spiritual communion, by aspiring after the bread of life. O the excellence of this heavenly prayer: so short in words, that the meanest capacity may easily learn it; and so copious in its contents, that they might fill whole volumes! And what a pity that the generality of Christians, should run over this admirable prayer, with so little sense of what they are saying; and with dispositions so opposite to the import of those sacred petitions!

Consider 2dly, that, in the beginning of this divine prayer, we call God *our Father*: and we are authorized to call him so by the Son of God himself. Stand astonished, my soul, at this high favour: what greater dignity can any creature be raised to, than to be called, and to be a child of God; to have

him for our Father, who made heaven and earth, and who fills heaven and earth with his infinite majesty? O my soul, see thou never degenerate from this dignity of a child of God, by behaving thyself unworthily of such a Father. See thou never more make thyself a slave to sin or Satan: O child of heaven, lie no longer grovelling in the mire of the earth. In this prayer we are taught to address ourselves to *our Father, who is in heaven*: to the end, that we may reflect, whither we are to direct our thoughts, when we pray; and that we may not suffer any attachment to the things of the earth, by love and affection, to hinder them from freely flying up to heaven. My soul, where are thy thoughts in the time of prayer? Do no irregular affections chain them down to the earth; when they ought to be in heaven?

Consider *sdly*, what encouragement it ought to be to a Christian, when he goes to his prayers, to remember that he is presenting his petitions to *his Father*; and to such a Father; who has an incomparable love for his children: who encourages them to ask; who teaches them, in this excellent prayer, what they are to ask for; who has frequently promised to grant them what they ask, provided it be good for them; and whose power, riches, bounty, and mercy, are all equally infinite. O! let this title of *our Father*, which we give to God, in the Lord's Prayer, raise our hopes in him; let it inflame our hearts with love for so amiable a Father; let it bespeak a reverential awe, a filial fear of offending such a parent; and an earnest desire of being ever a dutiful and obedient child.

Conclude ever to esteem and love this divine prayer, and daily to use it with a serious attention, and suitable devotion.

Thursday after the second Sunday.

On, *Hallowed be thy Name.*

CONSIDER first, that the first petition of the Lord's prayer is contained in these words: *Hal-*

lowed be thy name : that is, may thy name be ever blessed and praised, honoured and glorified. This petition claims the first place in the Lord's Prayer, as its undoubted right ; because the first and principal duty of a Christian, is to love his God with his whole heart and soul ; and therefore, the first and principal thing he ought to desire and pray for, is the greater honour and glory of God. His love for his God makes him rejoice, to think that he is, in himself, infinitely happy and glorious, and will be so for all eternity : and that he is, and will be eternally adored, praised, and glorified by all his angels and saints. But then it grieves him to think, how little this infinite goodness is known in this miserable world ; how little this great object of his love, is loved here below ; how little he is honoured, praised, and glorified, by these very souls of ours, made by him, and for him ; and which can never be happy, but in the love and enjoyment of him. And therefore the intent of this petition is to remedy so great an evil, by earnestly begging of the Sovereign Good the source of all grace and good, that he would glorify his own most sacred name in us, by effectually teaching us to love, serve, and glorify him.

Consider 2dly, that this petition contains an act of divine love, even of perfect charity and benevolence, inasmuch as it expresses the longing desires of the soul for the greater honour, praise, and glory of her Maker, as the only good she can wish, or procure, to his infinite majesty. It contains also an act of the most perfect charity for herself ; because, in praying that God's name may be glorified in all, and by all, she desires, in the first place, that it may be glorified in herself, and by herself ; now what greater good can she wish, or procure for herself, than that God may be ever glorified in her, and by her ; and that her whole being may be ever consecrated to his glory, for time and eternity ? And as the most perfect act of charity for our neighbours, is that by

which we labour to procure their greatest good, and the like good as we desire for ourselves: whilst by this petition, we dedicate our whole selves to the divine glory, we do as much for our neighbours also, by praying that God's name may be sanctified in them all, and by them all, both now and for ever. And this love we here exercise, both with regard to ourselves, and to our neighbours, is pure and perfect charity: because God is both the beginning and the end of it; inasmuch as we love both ourselves and our neighbours with relation to the greater glory of God. Thus divine charity, in all its branches, is exercised in this first petition.

Consider 3dly, that in praying for the *hallowing*, or sanctifying, of the name of God, we pray, in effect, for the sanctification of the whole world: that the knowledge of the true and living God, and of his Son Jesus Christ, may be spread over all the earth: that all nations may serve him, all tongues may praise him; and all hearts may love him: in a word, that all men upon earth may be saints; and may be all happily united in publishing the glory of God's name; not merely by their words, but much more by their lives. For this is the most perfect way of *sanctifying* the name of God. See, then, my soul, the vast extent of this petition, by which we pray for all glory to God, and for all good to man, both for here and hereafter: and let thy heart go along with thy tongue, as often as thou repeatest it.

Conclude to let this earnest desire of the greater glory of God in all things, be ever the predominant passion of thy heart, and he will glorify thee for all eternity.

Friday after the second Sunday.

Thy Kingdom come.

CONSIDER first, that in this second petition we pray for *the kingdom of God*. Now we find in holy writ, that the *kingdom of God* is understood in three different ways. First, of the eternal kingdom

of God in heaven : 2dly, of the spiritual kingdom of Christ, in his Church, upon earth : 3dly, of the mystical kingdom of God in our souls, according to that of our Saviour, *St. Luke* viii. 21. *The kingdom of God is within you.* And in this petition, *thy kingdom come,* we pray for the kingdom of God, according to all these three acceptations of his kingdom. See, my soul, how ample and extensive this petition is, and how noble and sublime these things are, which thou art here taught to petition for. Stand astonished that a poor worm of the earth, extracted from nothing, and which is infinitely more humbling, taken up from the dunghill of sin and corruption, should be authorized to aspire after a kingdom ; even an eternal kingdom ; to live and reign, for endless ages, with the living God. Yet this we are here taught to pray for ; with an assurance of being heard, if we pray as we ought, from him who has the disposing of this kingdom. And this is one part of the import of this petition, and contains an act of divine hope.

Consider 2dly, that as the kingdom of God is often taken in the scriptures to signify that spiritual kingdom, which Christ came to establish upon earth, and his reign in his church, in which he is both King and Priest for ever ; so, in this petition, we are also to have an eye upon the propagation and exaltation of this kingdom of Christ : by earnestly begging that the reign of Satan and of sin may have an end ; that all infidels may be enlightened by the light of the gospel ; that all heresies, schisms, errors, and abuses, may be rooted out ; that all vices and scandals may be abolished amongst Christians ; and that divine faith, hope, and charity, with all other virtues, may reign, both in all the pastors of God's church, and in all the people of God. So that here is also exercised an act of perfect love ; both with relation to God, by desiring that his kingdom, his grace, and his truth, may be victorious over all the world ; and with relation to all mankind, by praying

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that all men may be subdued to that happy kingdom; and may be true and faithful subjects to this great King.

Consider 3dly, that, as true charity should begin at home, we are particularly to have in view, in this petition, the establishment of the kingdom of God in our own souls: by heartily desiring, and earnestly praying that God may come to us, and take full possession of our souls by his grace; that he may set up his throne within us, and reign without controul, and without rival, in our hearts: that he may suppress all rebellions there, subdue all our passions, and make our whole interior his own; by giving us a strong and perfect love for him. O blessed kingdom of divine love! When wilt thou come to me? When shalt thou be established in my soul? When shall thy sacred flames consume in me all that is any ways displeasing to my God, or that dares to rebel against him?

Conclude to make it thy business to seek, in the first place, this kingdom of God, by procuring his justice in thy soul; and, as he has promised, nothing else shall be wanting to thee. God must first be king in thy soul here, if thou ever hope to arrive at his eternal kingdom hereafter.

Saturday after the second Sunday.

Thy Will be done on Earth, as it is in Heaven.

CONSIDER first, that, in this third petition, the soul embraces, with all her heart, the holy will of God; earnestly desiring and praying, that both she herself, and every soul upon earth, may ever be, both a faithful servant, and a true lover of the divine will; even as the saints and angels are in heaven; who are so absorpt in the love of God, that they have no other will, but the will of God. So that this petition, like the two former, contains an act of divine love. A love of benevolence to God: inasmuch as the soul here desires to give all to God, and to bring both her own will, and all other wills, to him; that all

may embrace, bow down, and adore, love, serve, and obey the sacred will of God, and conform to it in all things. And a love of the most perfect charity to ourselves, and to our neighbours; in desiring and procuring for ourselves and them so great a good, as is this perfect conformity to the will of God; and that God's holy will may be ever done, both in us, and by us.

Consider 2dly, how just it is, that we should ever adhere to the holy will of God, and pray with all our hearts, that his holy will may be done in all things. The will of God is always good, is always wise, is always right, and equitable, is always beautiful: and therefore we ought always to embrace it, and love it. He perfectly knows what is best, and what is best for us: and if we leave ourselves in his hands, he will certainly order all things for the best; and therefore it is our wisest way, if we love ourselves, to give ourselves up to his holy will. The will of God is all powerful, and must take place; and therefore it is a madness to set ourselves against his almighty will; it serves for nothing but to make us miserable. The will of God, in effect, is God himself: and therefore we must ever submit, and obey it; we must always bow down and adore his sacred will.

Consider 3dly, that the will of God ought to be the Christian's rule in all things. In all our deliberations, whether with regard to temporals or spirituals, we ought first to consult the holy will of God, crying out to him, with the convert, St. Paul, *Acts ix. 6. Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?* And this with a sincere desire to know, and a perfect readiness of mind to follow his will, which ever way he is pleased to order or direct: not seeking that his will should bend to ours, but that ours may ever conform to his. And as, in all our doings, we must, to the best of our knowledge and power, follow the will of God; so, in all our sufferings, we must resign and submit ourselves to his blessed will; assuring ourselves, that

nothing happens to us in this kind, but by the appointment of heaven, and that all comes from the hand of him that knows what is best, because he is infinitely wise; and sends what is for the best, because he is infinitely good, and good to us.

Conclude ever to recite this third petition of the Lord's prayer, with these dispositions of the love of God and of his holy will; and of a perfect conformity in all things to his holy will. We read of a servant of God [Gregory Lopez] that for some years, at every breath, repeated this petition, *Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven.* O that we could always be in the like happy sentiments!

Third Sunday after Easter.

Give us this Day our daily Bread.

CONSIDER first, that, after seeking, in the three first petitions, the greater glory of the name of God, the propagation of his kingdom, and the execution of his will, both in heaven and in earth; we are taught in the fourth petition, to pray for all necessities for ourselves, both for soul and body, under the name of our *daily bread*, which we here beg for *this short day* of our mortal life, in order to support us in our pilgrimage through the wilderness of this world, till we come to our true country, and to the happy day of everlasting light and life, in the heavenly kingdom of our Father. As to the things of this world, we pray for them with more indifference, as for things of lesser consequence; and which, if we seek first the kingdom of God and his justice, our Father has promised to furnish us with, *viz.* as far as he shall see expedient for us: and we pray for them for *to-day*, being forbidden to be solicitous for them for *to-morrow*. But what we are here more earnestly to pray for is, the bread which is to support the spiritual life of our souls, *viz.* the grace of God, the word of God, and the holy sacraments.

And this we beg both for ourselves, and for all the world, from the great Pastor of souls.

Consider 2dly, that the holy fathers expound this petition as meant in particular of the *bread of life*, which we receive in the blessed eucharist, for the food, nourishment, strength, and life of our souls. This bread is the sacred body, and blood, of Jesus Christ, the Son of God: who calls himself *the living bread which came down from heaven*, St. John vi. 51. and assures us, that he *that eateth of this bread shall live for ever*: and that *the bread which he will give is his flesh for the life of the world*, v. 52. This is here styled *our daily bread*; because given us, for this *our day of life*, and given to be our *daily support*; by our partaking of it, either really or spiritually, every day. O! my soul, ever aspire after this heavenly bread, the source of all grace and true life. Admire and adore the incomprehensible ways by which thy God seeks to communicate himself to thee; and see thou correspond with his goodness and love, by running daily to him, and giving thy whole self to him.

Consider 3dly, that the best way to answer the principal intent of this petition, is by making a spiritual communion (as often as we repeat those words, *give us this day our daily bread*) by a lively faith, and hope in Jesus Christ, the true bread of life; by aspiring after him, by love and desire; and by inviting him to come, and take full possession of our souls, and to unite them to himself for time and eternity. Happy those souls, that frequently in the day communicate in this manner!

Conclude to pray for thy *daily bread* in such manner as to have ever principally in view this *bread of life*; and to labour to partake of it daily, at least, by a spiritual communion.

Monday after the third Sunday.

Forgive us our Trespases, as we forgive them that trespass against us.

CONSIDER first, that, in this fifth petition, our Lord has furnished us with a daily remedy for those many evils into which we daily fall. *We all offend in many things*, (James iii. 2.) and not a day passes in which we are not contracting fresh debts to our great Master, either by omission or commission, in thought, word, or deed. Therefore we ought daily to sue for a discharge, and to call for mercy and forgiveness with a truly penitent heart: and this is the design of this petition of the Lord's Prayer; which, when recited with fervour, readily obtains the remission of these daily debts, and reinstates us in the good graces of our Master. These lesser faults, into which we daily fall, if neglected, and suffered to grow and multiply upon us, are of worse consequence to our souls than we can well imagine: the water that comes inso the ship by small chinks, if not daily pumped out, may, in time, encrease in such a manner as to sink the vessel. That the like may never happen to our souls, we must be daily repenting for these daily sins; and offering up daily for them the sacrifice of a contrite and humble heart, as often as we repeat this petition of the Lord's Prayer.

Consider 2dly, that, besides the obligation of daily labouring to procure the discharge of these daily debts, we must see if we have not reason to apprehend a more heavy load of debt lying upon our souls, on account of our past sins; more especially if, in any part of our life, we have lived in mortal sin. Alas! the load of such debts as these is immense, a sum of ten thousand talents, which we are utterly unable to discharge of ourselves; and whether our repentance has been sufficient to apply to our souls the discharge purchased by the blood of Christ, we cannot tell. And, therefore, our best security is,

to be always repenting for our past sins, and to beg daily of God, to forgive us all the sins of our youth and our ignorances; to cleanse us from our hidden sins; and to be merciful to us, with regard to the sins we may have any ways occasioned in others. And with this penitential spirit for all our past sins, known or unknown, we ought to recite this petition of the Lord's Prayer; and, with it, daily present ourselves, like Magdalen, at the feet of our Redeemer, imploring his mercy, both for ourselves, and for all poor sinners.

Consider 3dly, that, in this petition, we beg of God to *forgive us our trespases, as we forgive them that trespass against us*. Which words were added by our Lord, to put us in mind, that we must not look for forgiveness from God of the offences we commit against him, if we do not forgive; from our hearts, the offences which our neighbours commit against us. See, Christians, how much our Lord takes to heart our forgiving one another, and loving our very enemies; since, not content with frequently inculcating this duty on all other occasions, he was pleased to insert it in the very prayer he would have us daily to say, to the end we might never forget it. Let us then examine well our dispositions in this regard, and lay aside all rancour and animosity against our neighbours, when we go to sue for mercy from God; otherwise we shall never obtain the mercy we ask.

Conclude to take occasion, from this petition of the Lord's Prayer, to practice daily these three lessons: 1st, of a hearty repentance for thy daily sins: 2dly, of daily renewing thy sorrow and contrition for thy past offences: and lastly, of daily exercising charity and mercy, in forgiving from thy heart all that have offended thee.

Tuesday after the Third Sunday.

Lead us not into Temptation.

CONSIDER first, that, after begging of our Lord, in the foregoing petition, the forgiveness of the sins we have already committed, we here beg of him to preserve us from relapsing into any of our former offences, or being ever any more guilty of wilful sin. The true penitent abhors the monster sin, beyond all other evils whatsoever; and therefore he is not content with seeking the remission of all his offences, but is ever solicitous to avoid the like evils for the time to come: and, therefore, he flies the occasions of them; seeks to keep out of all dangerous temptations; and being sensible of his own weakness, he is earnest in prayer to beg of God to stand by him, and to help him to overcome all the enemies of his soul; and rather to let him die a thousand deaths, than to commit any one wilful sin. And this is the principal meaning of this petition, *Lead us not into temptation*: which ought to be recited by all Christians, with these dispositions of a great horror of sin, and a most earnest desire to be ever preserved from it.

Consider 2dly, in what sense we here beg of God *not to lead us into temptation*; since, as St. James says, (chap. i. 13.) *God is not a tempter of evils; and he tempteth no man*: viz. so as to incite, allure, or provoke to sin. No, certainly: such temptations as these cannot be from God, who is essentially good, and ever abhors sin; but they are from the world, the flesh, and the devil: yet as these never have power to tempt us, but with God's permission, nor strength to overcome us, but when we neglect to apply, in a proper manner, to God for his grace; therefore we make use of this expression, to signify our total dependance on God, and to beg that he would not give the enemy any power over us, nor suffer us to give ourselves up to him. Moreover, as those trials, which God often sends for the exercise of our virtue, and for the proof of our fidelity, are also in Scrip-

ture called *temptations*: such as afflictions, crosses, pains, &c. of which God is certainly the author and distributor: we beg of him, by these words, *Lead us not into temptation*, that, with relation to all such trials as these, he would ever have regard to our weakness, and never lay upon us any load above our strength.

Consider Sdly, with regard to temptations, that they are no sins to us, if we give no way to them, nor bring them upon us by our own fault. So far from it, that they are often the occasions of very great good to our souls; by obliging us to watch and to pray the more, from the sense of our danger; by keeping us humble; and by affording us the opportunity of gaining as many victories, and consequently as many glorious crowns for all eternity, as we have had conflicts with the enemy, by occasion of temptations. Wherefore it is not the meaning of this petition to pray that we may never have any temptation, (for this might not be expedient for us) but that we may never yield to temptation. But as for the seeking or desiring temptations, it would be too great a rashness to weak souls; and more especially with regard to temptations against purity; it would be a crime to affect them, or, without necessity, to expose one's self to them. Christians, let us learn to arm ourselves for this warfare, with the armour of the fear of God, and a lively faith: let us stand upon our guard, by watching and praying: let us readily and heartily resist the first attacks of the enemy: let us bear with patience and humility, the labour and trouble of the conflict; but ever reject with horror, the criminal satisfaction proposed by the enemy.

Conclude to observe these rules with regard to temptation; to join always an humble distrust in thyself, with a firm confidence in God; and ever to have recourse to him, in all thy conflicts, by humble and fervent prayer; and thou shalt always come off with victory.

Wednesday after the Third Sunday.

Deliver us from Evil.

CONSIDER first, that this petition is near akin to the two foregoing petitions; inasmuch as the main drift of the former of them was to deliver us from the *evil* of our past sins; and of the latter to keep us from the *evil* of sin, for the time to come; and this, in general, begs to be delivered from *all evil*, past, present, or to come. Now, of all these evils, sin is not only the greatest, but is, in some sense, the only thing that deserves to be called evil: because all other things, that we call evils, are either the consequence of sin, or cease to be real evils when not accompanied with sin. So that the main business of this petition is to beg of God that he would deliver us from all sin, past, present, or to come; from all the consequences of sin, and the punishments which our sins have deserved; from the slavery of our passions and sinful habits; and from the tyranny and possession of the evil one, who has the dominion over all wilful sinners. Good God, for thy mercy sake, and through the precious blood of thy Son, our Redeemer, deliver us from all these dreadful evils!

Consider 2dly, by descending into particulars, all that scene of numberless evils, to which we are liable, on account of sin, in this miserable world; and from which we here pray to be delivered by the mercy of God: such as all public calamities, wars, plagues, famines, earthquakes, tempests, inundations, &c. besides a multitude of private evils, to which each particular person is so frequently exposed. Then all spiritual evils, which are much more deplorable, whether public or private; heresies, schisms, persecutions of the church, errors, abuses, oppressions of the poor, sacrileges, scandals, national vices, and the general reign of Satan and sin in the thoughts, words, and actions, of the children of this world. And, with regard to the future, the dreadful evil of unprovided death, and final impenitence; the dis-

mal sufferings of another world; the judgment and sentence of eternal damnation; and the second death of a miserable eternity. And do not so many and such lamentable evils well deserve that we should continually pray that God in his mercy would deliver us all from having any share in them?

Consider 3dly, as to thyself in particular, how many and how great evils thou hast reason to apprehend; to be either actually upon thee, or to threaten thee on every side. Reflect on the multitude of thy past and present sins, infinitely more numerous, and more enormous, than thou imaginest; the uncertainty of the forgiveness of them, because of the uncertainty, the weakness, and inconstancy of thy repentance; the dreadful debt of punishment due to thy sins, and how little thou hast done towards the discharge of it; the vices and passions thou art daily subject to; the many enemies that encompass thee, and are continually laying snares for thy soul; the corruption of thy own heart, the blindness of thy understanding, thy weakness in all that is good, and the violence of thy concupiscence, and inclinations to evil. Then see what thou hast to apprehend of evil for the future, from the judgments of God, ever hanging over the head of impenitent sinners; from the malice and subtlety of thy enemies, ever intent upon thy ruin; and the hold thou givest them by thy passions, and that unhappy self-love which keeps a continual correspondence with them; lastly, from that miserable death, judgment, and hell, which are the portion of all who, by occasion of mortal sin unrepented of, fall into the hands of the living God: and thou wilt be convinced of the necessity of thy crying out to thy only Redeemer: *Deliver us from evil. Amen.*

Conclude to embrace humble and fervent prayer, as the sovereign means to be delivered from all evils, past, present, or to come: and as these evils continually threaten thee, so let thy prayer also be in some measure continual.

Thursday after the third Sunday.

On Morning Prayer.

CONSIDER first, that every servant of God ought to begin the day with the worship of God, and to *give his heart*, as the wise man says, (*Eccles. xxxix. 6.*) *to resort early to the Lord that made him*; and to pour forth his prayer in the sight of the Most High. The manna of heaven melted away, and was lost, if the people of God did not get up before the sun to gather it: *that it might be known to all men*, says Solomon, (*Wisdom xvi. 28.*) *that we must prevent the sun to bless God, and worship him at the dawning of the light.* O God, my God, says the royal prophet; (*Ps. lxii.*) *to thee do I watch at break of day.* My soul, see thou never neglect this morning worship of thy God. Let not the devil run away with thy first thoughts: but give them to God, by a pure and perfect offering of thy whole self to his love and service, for that day, and for all eternity: and whilst thou art rising and dressing thyself, keep thyself in his company, and speak to him.

Consider 2dly, what are the particular acts of virtue and religion, that ought to be the ingredients of thy morning prayer, *viz.* 1. An act of adoration of the infinite majesty of God, and of homage to him; by bowing down both body and soul to worship him with all thy powers, as thy first beginning, and thy last end; and to acknowledge his absolute sovereignty, and thy total dependance on him. 2. An act of *thanksgiving* for all his benefits in general, and in particular to thee and all the world: for creation, preservation, redemption, vocation to the true faith, &c. as also for his eternal love, and, in consequence of this love, his bringing thee to the beginning of this new day, in order to bring thee forward to the happy day of eternity. 3. An act of *contrition*, for all thy past ingratitude, and for all thy sins, with a sincere resolution of renouncing them all for the future. 4. An offering of all thy thoughts, words, and

actions of the day, to the honour and glory of God; and of thy whole soul, to be employed in loving and serving him. 5. An humble and fervent supplication, to beg the grace of God, and his blessing, for thyself, and for the whole church: that he would keep all from sin, and teach all effectually to love him, and serve him for ever. 6. Conclude always with acts of faith, hope, and charity; and recommend thyself to the prayers and protection of the Blessed Virgin, of thy good Angel, and of all the Angels and glorified Saints.

Consider Sdly, that thou must also remember, in thy morning exercise, to declare war against thy customary failings and sins; but more especially against thy predominant passion, which is the most dangerous of all thy enemies. This is that daily warfare in which all, of necessity, must be engaged, who have a mind to save their souls: we must all fight, and fight continually, against our vices and passions, or they will carry us to hell. Now this it is that obliges us to renew every morning our good resolutions; yet without trusting at all in ourselves; and to arm, and prepare ourselves beforehand for these conflicts, by forecasting the occasions and temptations we are like to meet with in the day; and by concluding upon the measures proper to be taken, in order to overcome them, either by flight, or fight; but principally by fervent prayer to our Lord, to help us in the combat, and to grant us the victory.

Conclude to be ever diligent in this morning exercise. A good beginning of the day is a great matter. He will have the whole day, to whom thou givest the beginning of it.

Friday after the third Sunday.

On Evening Prayer.

CONSIDER first, that, as God is our *first beginning*, forasmuch as we are made *by* him; so is he also our *last end*, because we are made *for* him: and, therefore, as we ought to *begin* the day with

him, by morning prayer; so we ought to *end* the day in his company, by evening prayer. Morning and evening prayer are like the two daily meals of the soul, that ought not, upon any account, to be omitted, least the soul should languish and grow sick, for want of her daily food: and if, upon any occasion, we are hindered from taking these meals, at their usual times, we ought to observe what we practise with regard to our bodily meals, that is, we must procure to take them afterwards, at the first opportunity. Moreover, as we make it our care that our families, and such as are under our charge, should not want their daily corporal sustenance, so we ought much more to make it our care, that their souls may not starve, for want of our assembling them to prayer, or seeing that they are regular in this daily exercise.

Consider 2dly, that one of the principal businesses of the evening exercise, is the daily examination of conscience, which may be made in this manner: 1. Place thyself in the presence of God, bow thyself down, and adore him; and give him thanks for all that he has done that day for thee, and for the whole world. 2. Earnestly beg his light and grace, that thou mayest discover all thy sins, and be heartily sorry for them. 3. Endeavour to call to mind how thou hast spent the day from morning till night; what care thou hast taken to discharge thyself well, both of the common duties of a Christian, and of the particular duties of thy station or calling: and especially how thou hast behaved thyself with regard to thy customary failings, and thy predominant passion. 4. Endeavour to be heartily sorry for all the sins of the day, and for all the sins of thy whole life, known or unknown: go in spirit to the feet of Christ, to make an humble confession of them to him, and implore his mercy. 5. Resolve upon a serious and thorough amendment for the future: determine to begin, from that very hour, a new life, and think upon the means of accomplishing it. O! how happy are those souls that labour in this manner every

night to wash away their sins with penitential tears; and that never venture to lie down to rest under the guilt of sin! Unhappy they, who, for want of this precaution, expose themselves every night to the evident danger of dying in their sins, and even of finding themselves in hell before morning.

Consider 3dly, that, in order to end the day well, we ought every night to endeavour to put ourselves, as much as possible, in the condition in which we should be glad to be found at the hour of our death. And therefore, besides offering up to God, every night, the sacrifice of a contrite and humble heart, for all the sins of our life, the Christian should also think seriously of his last end; and dispose himself for it, by acts of a lively faith, and of an entire confidence in his Redeemer; by a perfect oblation and resignation of himself to the holy will of God; and by aspiring to an eternal union with him; and in the meantime, hiding himself, with great affection, in the sacred wounds of Jesus Christ, and there composing himself to rest. See, my soul, thou never forget this practice.

Conclude never to neglect any part of this evening exercise; and to see that it be not neglected by any under thy care. A religious performance of this duty will be a great means to secure to thy soul a happy death.

Saturday after the third Sunday.

On praying always.

CONSIDER first, that we are not only to address ourselves to God by prayer, in the morning, and in the evening; but we are also called upon, in the word of God, *to pray always*, St. Luke xviii. 1. *To pray without ceasing*, (1 Thes. v. 17.) and to *seek the face of the Lord evermore*, Ps. civ. 4. The soul that truly loves her God, will never bear to stay all the day long without often thinking of him and speaking to him, seeing he has both his eye and his heart always upon her. Love ever seeks the com-

pany and conversation of its beloved: now it is by the means of prayer that we are introduced into the company and conversation of our great lover; and we quickly lose both his love and him, if we pass whole days in the forgetfulness of him. Besides other dangers, that continually threaten us, when we do not run under the wings of God, and keep close to him, by continual prayer. So that if we love either God, or ourselves, we must frequently in the day have recourse to prayer. It is the very breathing and life of the soul; and therefore, to think to confine it to the morning, or evening only, is to expose the soul to the danger of perishing for want of breath.

Consider 2dly, that the practice of this continual prayer, does not require that we should be always upon our knees, nor yet that we should always have a prayer-book in our hands, or be always reciting a form of prayer: nor does it any ways break in upon our other employments, so as to be any hindrance to them; no not even to our common conversation, or recreations: but it only consists in a certain sense and conviction of the presence of God, and in frequent conversions of the soul to him. Thus, for example, in the beginning of every action, the soul should turn to her God, (who is always near her, and in the very midst of her) by offering up to his honour and glory what she is going to do; and, at the same time, offering her whole self to him: thus, in the midst of all her actions and conversations, she should frequently tend to him, by aspirations or breathings of love; and call him to her assistance, by short ejaculatory prayers. This way of proceeding will sanctify all her common performances, and make them all partake both of the nature, and of the benefit of prayer.

Consider 3dly, how diligently the ancient patriarchs were in this exercise of *praying always*; since the scripture says, *they walked with God, and in his sight*; which implies their ever thinking of him, and

having a constant attention to please him. The like was the practice of the fathers of the desert, and so many other saints, who, even whilst their hands were at work, took care to have their hearts on God. Christians, let us imitate these servants of God; and, since no time, nor place, nor company, nor occupation, can exclude the divine immensity, which fills heaven and earth; nor hinder God from being so near to us, that our very souls are not more present to our bodies, which they animate, than God is to the very center of our souls; let no time, nor place, nor company, nor occupation, divert us from often thinking of him, and often speaking to him, in our hearts. No conversation can be so honourable, so profitable, or so agreeable, as this which we hold in the closet of our souls with our Sovereign Good.

Conclude to aim, with all thy power, at this inward conversation with God, in the midst of all thy external occupations. In order to this; keep thy mind pure from impertinent amusements, and roving imaginations; and thy heart from all disorderly ties and affections to creatures; and God will fill both thy mind and thy heart, and will effectually teach thee to pray always.

Fourth Sunday after Easter.

On the great Commandment of Divine Love.

CONSIDER first, those words of the divine law: quoted *Mark xii. 30. Thou shalt love the Lord thy God, with thy whole heart, and with thy whole soul, and with thy whole mind, and with thy whole strength.* This, says our Lord, is the greatest, and the first commandment, *Matt. xxii. 39.* Yes, my soul, it is the greatest of all the commandments of God, in his divine eyes; and that which he takes most of all to heart; since he has made our souls to his own image and likeness, to this very end, that we should love him, and should dedicate our whole being to his divine love, for all the time of our pilgrimage here upon earth; that so we might come to

be happily united to him, in an eternal band of love; in his heavenly kingdom. O the excellent dignity of this divine commandment, which tends directly and immediately to raise our souls above this earth, and above the heaven of heavens, and the whole created universe, and to bring them to the God that made heaven and earth, and to unite them to him, by a most perfect love, both for time and eternity!

Consider 2dly, the incomprehensible goodness of God, manifested to us in this commandment; in his insisting so much upon our loving him; and upon our tending with all our power to a union with him. Is then our love of any consequence to him? Or can we add any thing to his happiness by loving him? Or will he lose any thing if we refuse him our love? And what is there in us, poor little ants, if compared to his infinite majesty, that he should concern himself whether we love him or no? Would it not be an unspeakable favour to us, that he should even suffer us, considering who he is, and who we are, to aspire so high as to pretend to his love? But that this great God should make it a commandment, and the very first and principal of all his commandments; that we should love him, and love him with our whole heart; that he should insist upon our entering into this strict league of eternal friendship with him, promising all happiness for eternity upon our compliance, and threatening us with most dreadful and eternal evils, if we love him not: it is this that shews forth, and sets in so wonderful a light, the goodness of our God, and his love for us; that we should be not only most wretched, insensible, and ungrateful beyond expression, but even, in some sense, worse than devils, if we should refuse him our love.

Consider 3dly, the excellence of this commandment of divine love, with regard to the fruits it brings to our souls. Divine love is the queen of virtues: she never comes alone: but brings all other virtues along with her: she gives life to them all: even

faith, and hope, are dead, when she is not in their company. She brings with her the remission of all our sins: she makes us the friends and favourites of the Most High: she makes us his children, his spouses, his temples: she is the *band of all perfection*. O, my soul, how glorious it is, how happy, how delightful, to be thus united to thy God by a strict band of friendship and love! O embrace then, with all thy powers, this great commandment; which, by obliging thee to give thy whole self up to the love of God, brings down thy God, with all his treasures, to thee!

Conclude to make it henceforward the business of thy life, to learn this great lesson of loving God: and as no one but God himself can effectually teach thee so sublime, and so divine a science, continually beg of him to introduce thee into his school, which he holds in thy interior, and there to be thy master.

Monday after the fourth Sunday.

On loving the Lord our God above all things.

CONSIDER first, the import of these words: *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God*: and thou shalt find in them innumerable motives to dedicate thyself to divine love. For who is this thou art here commanded to love? **THE LORD**: that is, the eternal, self-existent, incomprehensible, and infinite being of beings, who alone properly is, and who is being itself. For all this is implied in that ineffable name, which is here rendered: **THE LORD**. *I am, who am*, saith he, *Exod. iii. 14*. And, *He who is, hath sent me to you*. **THE LORD**, that is, the Creator, and absolute master of the whole universe; of all things visible and invisible: infinitely powerful, infinitely wise, infinitely good, infinitely beautiful: the one true sovereign good: infinite in all perfections: goodness, beauty, perfection, and truth itself: compared with whom all things else are just nothing at all. See, my soul, how many motives

thou hast to love this great *Lord*, who comprises in himself all that is lovely and charming, who is the immense ocean of all good.

Consider 2dly, the motives of divine love implied in those words, *THY GOD*; forasmuch as they signify that this Lord of infinite majesty is also pleased to be *thine*. Yes, he is *thy God*, he is *thy* first beginning, and *thy* last end: he is *thy* maker, who has made thee for himself; and who many ways daily communicates himself to thee: he is *thy* father, *thy* spouse, *thy* pastor, *thy* keeper, *thy* constant benefactor, *thy* ever faithful friend, *thy* ancient and most disinterested lover, *thy* sovereign good, and the source of all *thy* good, for time and eternity. And whereas thou wast fallen from him, and from his love by sin, he has been pleased to give himself to thee, in a manner still more endearing, by sending his own Son to be *thy* Saviour and Redeemer. O reflect, my soul, on what the Son of God has done, and has suffered for the love of thee. From the first moment of his conception, thou wast always in his heart. His love for thee brought him down from his heavenly throne, to take flesh and blood in the womb of the Virgin: his love for thee made him offer up his flesh and blood upon the altar of the cross, a sacrifice for thy sins; his love for thee made him bequeath thee this same flesh and blood in an admirable sacrament, to unite thee to himself for eternity. And shall not all this oblige thee to love him, and to love him with thy whole heart?

Consider 3dly, that this love which we owe to our God, both as infinitely good in himself, and as infinitely good to us, must be a love of preference; that is, we must love him above all other things whatsoever. For he that loves his worldly honour, his interest, his pleasure, his own will, the gratifying his humours and passions, or the pleasing of any person, how near or dear-soever, more than his God, is not worthy of God; but is guilty of high treason against him, and of a kind of idolatry, in preferring the

creature before the Creator, who is blessed for evermore. And not only he that prefers any creature before God; but he that even offers to put himself, his own life, his dearest affections, or any other thing created, or even the whole creation, in balance with his God, so as to love them as much as God; is in like manner unworthy of God, and offers him the greatest outrage imaginable: because the whole universe, compared with God, is a mere nothing; and therefore cannot, without an intolerable injury, be put in balance with him. Ah! what must I then think of myself, when I have so often preferred empty toys, mere vanities, and lying follies, before the living God?

Conclude, henceforward at least, to love the Lord thy God above all things: and nothing else with him, but what thou lovest for his sake, and with relation to him. Cry out with St. Michael, *Quis ut Deus?* Who is like to God? And who but he deserves our heart?

Tuesday after the fourth Sunday.

On loving God with our whole Heart.

CONSIDER first, that the first sacrifice which divine love calls for, by this great commandment, is that of our heart. My son, *give me thy heart*, says the Wisdom of God, *Prov. xxiii. 26.* This sacrifice must be of the whole heart, and in the nature of a *holocaust*; that is, of a sacrifice, in which the *whole* victim is given to God without reserve; being first slain, and then laid upon the altar of God, and there consumed with fire; even with that fire which originally came from heaven, (*Levit. ix. 24.*) and which was commanded to be kept always burning upon God's altar. Wherefore, in this mystical sacrifice of love, this heart of ours, in order to be made a holocaust, should also first be slain; that is, should first die to itself, and to all its disorderly affections, by mortification and self-denial; and so be laid on God's altar, to be wholly dedicated and con-

separated to him; and to evaporate, as it were, to him, in the flames of divine love; which is the true fire that comes down from heaven to carry us up thither; and which ought always to be kept burning in the mystical temple of God in our souls.

Consider 2dly, how just, how reasonable, how necessary it is, that we should love our God with our *whole heart*; so as to give no part of it away from him: since it belongs wholly to him by all manner of titles. He made our heart for himself, to be the eternal seat, and the living temple of his love; and he has given it a certain appetite after him, together with an immense capacity of love, which nothing less than God can fill or satisfy. He has shed his own most precious blood to purchase our heart; to cleanse it for himself, and to fill it with his love. It has been solemnly dedicated, sanctified, and consecrated to him at our baptism. He has sent his divine spirit to take possession of it; to make it his kingdom; and to establish his throne in it. It must be then a most crying injustice, if we offer to alienate any part of our heart from him, who claims it all, upon so many titles. O, Christians! let us give him what is his, without reserve: let us divert no part of this small heart of ours away from the immense Lord of heaven and earth: it would be a sacrilege to attempt it.

Consider 3dly, that the love of God will not admit of a divided heart: he will not suffer a rival in his kingdom, a partner in his throne, or an idol in his temple. Our God is a jealous God, and therefore, if we follow any other lovers, we lose his love, and drive him away from us. Alas! my soul, who is this that thou wouldst associate with God in thy heart? Is it thy worldly pride, thy carnal affections, thy sensual inclinations? Assure thyself his love cannot endure such company as this. Or is it some favourite creature, which thou art unwilling to dislodge from the place it has occupied in thy heart? Ah! the bed is too narrow; it will not hold two;

thou must either part with the creature or the Creator. He loves God too little that loves any thing else with him, which he does not love in him, for his sake, and with subordination to the love of him.

Conclude to love thy friend in God, and thy enemy for God's sake; and all such things as thou mayest lawfully love, according to the measure and rule prescribed by divine love: and thus no love of the creature will take off any part of thy heart from the love of the Creator: thus thou shalt *love him with thy whole heart.*

Wednesday after the fourth Sunday.

On loving God with our whole Soul.

CONSIDER first, that we are not only to love God with our *whole heart*; that is, with our whole affection: but also with our *whole soul*; that is, by applying, and employing all the powers of our soul, in his divine love and service: because he made these souls of ours after his own image and likeness, for this very end, that they might be wholly dedicated to his love; and might turn all their powers and faculties towards him, to serve and glorify him for ever. Bring then, my soul, bring all thy powers to thy God, and oblige them all to bow down to this divine law of love, and ardently to embrace its happy service; which will ennoble and perfect them all. O let thy understanding be ever directed by its bright light, into the ways of truth! The light of divine love will expel the dark mists raised by thy passions and self-love, which so often over-cloud thee, and make thee go astray. Let thy memory be ever recollected by divine love. Let all thy words and actions, let all thy desires, be ever guided and actuated by this heavenly charity. O blessed kingdom of divine love, when wilt thou come to me, and take full possession of my *whole soul*!

Consider 2dly, that as the will is that ruling power of the soul, which is the proper seat of love; so it is the will, amongst all the powers of the soul, that

ought, in a special manner, to be dedicated and consecrated to *divine love*. The will ever has good for the object of her love; so as not to be able to love, or embrace any thing, but under the form, or appearance at least, of good. Now God alone is the true and sovereign good; and he alone can satisfy the inbred appetite she has for good. In the love of him alone she finds herself happy: all other loves do but impose upon her, and deceive her with empty airy appearances. Therefore, for his sake, and because he is infinitely good in himself; as well as for her own sake, and because he is *her only true and sovereign good*; she ought to give her whole self up to his heavenly love. O how happy is that will, that is thus wholly dedicated to the love of God! How happy is that will that is the eternal servant of divine love, and makes a constant sacrifice of her whole liberty and property to the all-wise, all-powerful, and ever-loving will of God!

Consider Idly, how the great pattern of divine love, Jesus Christ, our Saviour, began the work of our redemption, by devoting his whole will, without reserve, and with all the ardour of his soul, to do, and to love, the blessed will of his Father. Hear how he expresses himself, *Ps. xxxix. 8, 9. Then said I: Behold I come. In the head of the book it is written of me, that I should do thy will: O, my God, I have desired it, and thy law in the midst of my heart.* This will of his Father was, during his whole life, the continual object of his love, the subject of all his thoughts; the motive of all his words and actions; he loved it so that it was his very food; he laid down his life for the love of it. And didst not thou also, my soul, come into this world to love, and to do the will of God? Is not thy will given thee for this end? Hast thou any other business here? Is it not also written of thee in the book of life, that thou shouldst do the will of God? And canst thou say with thy Saviour, *O, my God, it is what I have willed, and*

desired, in the midst of my heart ! O take heed, lest if thy will fall from this love of the will of God, and of his holy law; thy name be blotted out of the book of life, which, in effect, is the same as the book of love.

Conclude to dedicate thy whole soul, with all its powers, to the love of God; and especially to make over thy will to him, without reserve. This is a devotion the most solid, and the most secure; the most agreeable to God, and the most advantageous to thyself.

Thursday after the fourth Sunday.

On loving God with our whole Mind.

CONSIDER first, that our *whole mind* ought also to be consecrated to divine love, according to the import of that greatest and first commandment of our heavenly lover. Now the mind is the seat of thought, and consequently, of consideration, meditation, and recollection in God. Wherefore, to love God with our *whole mind*, is to have our thoughts ever turned towards him; to consider him; to meditate daily upon him and his truths; and upon all that relates to him, or helps to bring the soul to him; to walk always in his presence; and to keep ourselves recollected in the remembrance of him. This love of the *whole mind* was required of all the servants of God, even in the old law; and much more in the new, which is the law of love. *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God, &c.* said he, (Deut. vi.) *and these words which I command thee this day, shall be in thy heart: and thou shalt tell them to thy children, and thou shalt meditate upon them sitting in thy house, and walking on thy journey, sleeping and rising: and thou shalt bind them as a sign upon thy hand, and they shall be, and shall move between thy eyes, and thou shalt write them on the doors of thy house.* See, my soul, how strongly thy God inculcates the perpetual remembrance of him and of his divine law; but more

especially of the great commandment of love, which is the fulfilling of the whole law. See how he expects that thy *whole mind* should be ever full of him:

Consider 2dly, how reasonable and just it is, that we should love our God with our *whole mind*, by ever remembering and thinking on him. He always remembers us, and thinks on us: his eye is always upon us: from all eternity we have ever had a place in his eternal *mind*, in which he has cherished us with infinite love: and shall we refuse him the place he calls for in our mind; or put him off with any thing less than our *whole mind*? Alas! what worthless things are we! How unworthy that this great God should give us any place in his thoughts, or concern himself at all about us! But O, my soul; let us never be so wretched, so ungrateful, so wicked (since he is pleased to shew so much love to us) as to suffer any more every empty toy, every idle roving imagination, every vain amusement, to take place of him in our mind, and banish him from our thoughts. We cannot be without thinking of something all the day long: and what can we think of so noble, so desirable, so lovely, so charming, so profitable, so delightful, as our God? What are we then doing, when we let whole days pass in thinking of every thing else but him? Surely this can never be loving him with our *whole mind*: or, indeed, loving him at all: for where the treasure is we love, there both our heart and mind will be.

Consider 3dly, the great advantages of ever keeping God in our mind, by a recollection of thought, and a remembrance of his presence. It is a most powerful restraint to keep us from all sin: it is a perpetual spur to make us run on in the way of virtue: it furnishes us with counsel in our doubts; comfort in our afflictions; encouragement in our labours; defence against all our enemies; protection in all dangers; it enlivens our faith, animates our hope, gives a continual increase to divine charity, and brings us, in some measure, into heaven, whilst we

are here living upon earth ; by ever keeping us in the company of God, invested as it were with him on all sides, and employed about him, by contemplation and love. O how true it is, that, as dissipation of thought, and forgetfulness of God, is the source of all our evils ; so recollection of the mind in God is the source of all our good ! O how happy then are those souls that always seek, in this manner, the face of the Lord, and turn their *whole mind* to him and his love !

Conclude to banish from thee all impertinent thoughts and vain amusements, all roving imaginations and useless schemes, which have too often hitherto occupied thy mind, and shut out thy God : and then thy beloved will quickly return to thee, and make thy soul his paradise.

Friday after the fourth Sunday.

On loving God with our whole Strength.

CONSIDER first, that the great precept of divine love claims also our *whole strength* : *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole strength.* As then, by virtue of the commandment of loving God with our *whole mind*, we are bound to give him our *thoughts* ; so, by being commanded to love him with our *whole strength*, we are to give him also our *words and actions*. We ourselves are his, and that by many titles : we were made by him alone, and for him alone : and therefore, as the whole fund is his, so also ought the whole produce ; as the tree is his, so ought all the fruit to grow for him : it would be a crying injustice to alienate it from him. Wherefore the love of God is not only to reside in our *heart*, to reign in all the powers of our *soul*, and to fill our *mind*, but ought also to shew itself in our whole conversation ; and to regulate all our words and actions, so as to give each one of them its due perfection. And this is loving God with our *whole strength*.

Consider 2dly, that the true love of God is like a fire which cannot lie idle ; neither does it content it-

self with affection only ; it always proceeds to *effects*. It works great things, when occasion and opportunity serve ; and, when these are wanting, it will do wonders at least, by the perfection it will give even to the least and most ordinary of our actions. This constant aiming at perfection, in our daily and ordinary actions, is one of the most important lessons of a spiritual life, and is the true practice of loving God with our *whole strength*. Now this perfection of our ordinary actions depends upon the purity and perfection of the intention, from which these actions flow. The intention is *pure*, when it aims at God alone : it is *perfect*, when it does all for the love of God, and for the greater glory of God. *Whether you eat or drink, or whatsoever else you do, do all to the glory of God*, says the apostle, 1 Cor. x. 31. The meanest action in life is ennobled by this intention ; it becomes even an act of divine love, and a new step to unite the soul with God. So that the readiest way to come to love God with *all our strength*, is to direct the whole body of our common actions to him, by the pure and perfect intention of ever doing his holy will, and procuring, in all things, his greater glory.

Consider 3dly, that, in order to love God with *all our strength*, by the perfection of our ordinary actions, besides this purity of intention, which ought both to go before, and to accompany all we do or say, we should also labour, in the progress of all our actions and conversations, to season them, as it were, and to sanctify them, by the exercise of frequent aspirations of divine love. This may be practised, by often turning our souls, on every occasion, to our beloved, considered as intimately present within us ; by longing after him ; offering our whole selves to him, rejoicing in his glory, begging for the advancement of the kingdom of his love, both in ourselves, and in the whole world ; and lamenting to see him every where so much offended, and his love so much slighted, &c. Nothing contributes more to advance

the soul in the love of God, than a diligence in this exercise.

Conclude to season all thy actions in this manner, with divine love; both by beginning them with a pure intention of the glory of God, and accompanying them with frequent acts of love; thus shalt thou love the Lord thy God with *thy whole strength*.

Saturday after the fourth Sunday.

On returning Love for Love.

CONSIDER first, that, besides the most pressing motive we have to love God, by reason of his own infinite beauty and perfection, and the infinite charms that all center in him, to command our love: besides all those attractions, which are found in his infinite mercy, his infinite bounty, his infinite wisdom, his infinite truth, &c. which are all infinitely amiable, beyond all that can be expressed, or conceived by the heart of man: besides also, that all our happiness is found in him; and that his love is our greatest honour, our greatest interest, our greatest pleasure, and that which alone can bring us to our Sovereign Good, even to the possession of God himself: in fine, besides that the whole creation in general, and every creature in particular, calls upon us to love God, and publishes aloud his infinite power, wisdom, and goodness, to engage us to love him, a generous soul finds a most strong and urgent motive to love God, in the consideration of the love that he has for us, and has had for us from all eternity; and the innumerable benefits he has bestowed upon us, in consequence of this eternal love. And yet, O strange ingratitude and insensibility! the far greatest part of poor mortals, notwithstanding all these numberless motives of love, are still cold, in the midst of so much fire, which surrounds them, as it were, on all sides; they still refuse a return of love, and still prefer the meanest of these earthly toys, and even mere filth, before their most loving and most lovely God. *O ye heavens, be astonished at so much*

baseness, so much blindness, and so much wickedness !

Consider 2dly, what kind of love this is that God bears to us. *He has loved us first* : his love is *ancient* ; his love has no beginning ; his love is *eternal* ; his love is *continual* ; his thought and heart are always upon us. His love is most faithful and *constant* ; his love never forsakes them, that do not first forsake his love. His love is most *generous* ; it imparts all good to his beloved ; it prepares an eternal kingdom for them ; it gives them himself for eternity. His love is most pure and *disinterested* ; he desires no other return from his beloved, but their love : and this, not for any service it will do to him (for it can do him none) but to unite them to himself, and make them happy. In fine, his love is *infinite*, both in its origin, which is himself, and in its communications, by giving us an eternal and infinite good, which is also himself. O, my soul, stand astonished to see that this great God, this boundless Majesty, should have such a love for thee ! O give him, in return for his love, all that thou canst give him, by loving him with all thy power, and he will be thine for ever.

Consider 3dly, the benefits, as well general as particular, that we have received, and daily do receive, from the infinite goodness of this our Eternal Lover. ‘ He is the Author of all our good : our
 ‘ very being, our whole soul and body is his gift. He
 ‘ has preserved us, he has nourished and cherished
 ‘ us, from the first moment of our conception to
 ‘ this hour : he has watched over us with an incom-
 ‘ parable love ; he has defended us from a thousand
 ‘ evils. He has given his angels a charge over us. He
 ‘ has sent his own Son from heaven for us, to deliver
 ‘ us from sin and hell, and to procure all mercy,
 ‘ grace, and salvation for us. The whole life of the
 ‘ Son of God upon earth was employed in serving
 ‘ us : he suffered for us the very worst of torments ;
 ‘ he shed all his most precious blood for the love of

Rogation Sunday.

‘ us. He has left with us all manner of helps, in
 ‘ order to bring us to himself, and to his heavenly
 ‘ kingdom: his word, his church, his sacrifice, his
 ‘ sacraments, his body and blood, his graces, his
 ‘ inspirations, &c. He has even then heaped fa-
 ‘ vours upon us, and kept us from death and hell,
 ‘ when we were his enemies by mortal sin : he has
 ‘ waited for us with infinite patience ; he has called
 ‘ us back with an infinite tenderness ; he has receiv-
 ‘ ed us with open arms when we have returned to
 ‘ him ; and has mercifully overlooked all our follies,
 ‘ all our disloyalties ; all our ingratitude and repeated
 ‘ treasons against him : besides many instances of
 ‘ his particular providence, which every one of us
 ‘ has met with, in some part or other of our life.
 ‘ And shall not all these, and innumerable other
 ‘ benefits and favours, oblige us to love him ?
 ‘ O ! blessed by all creatures be his goodness for
 ‘ ever !’

Conclude to have thy thoughts and heart always upon him, whose love is always heaping favours upon thee ; and to make a perpetual return of love to thy eternal lover.

*Rogation Sunday.**On the Devotion of the Time.*

CONSIDER first, that these days, between this Sunday and the ascension of our Lord, are days of devotion, and are called *Rogation-days*, because they are set aside, by the church, for solemn prayers and supplications, joined with abstinence and penance, in order to turn away the wrath of God, provoked by our sins ; to remove far from us his scourges, of wars, plagues, famines, &c. to implore his mercy, for ourselves, and for all his people ; and to beg his blessing upon the fruits of the earth. As the first institution of the devotion of these days was occasioned by a terrible scene of disasters, and visible judgments of God upon the people, to which a stop was put, by dedicating these three days to prayer

and penance: so the success, that attended this first essay, has encouraged the church to an annual practice of the like devotion ever since. Hence we may learn, with what dispositions of soul we ought to present ourselves before the throne of grace at this time: with what a lively sense of the guilt of our sins, and of the judgments we deserve for them, both here and hereafter; with what desire to return to God from our sins, and to offer him the sacrifice of a contrite and humble heart for them; and to join, as it were, in a body, at this time, with the whole people of God, in suing, in a proper manner, for his mercy, with most humble supplications and fervent prayers. See, my soul, if these be thy dispositions.

Consider 2dly, that although we do not every day feel the heavy hand of divine justice, by the experience of public calamities, or other visible judgments, yet, if we consider the guilt of so many crying sins, not only of particular persons, but even of whole nations, which are continually calling to God for vengeance, we shall find too much reason to apprehend that the sword of God's justice is even now hanging over our heads, and that the worst of his judgments will quickly fall upon Christendom in general, if not averted by prayer and penance. This consideration ought to determine all Christians in general (even the most innocent, if they have any concern for the public danger, or true charity for the souls of their neighbours) gladly to embrace so happy an opportunity as this, of joining with all the children of God in humiliations and prayer, in order to prevent the thunder of heaven from suddenly breaking over our heads, and hurrying away thousands into the bottomless pit. And as for every particular sinner, now is the most favourable time for him to sue for mercy, because at this time the whole church joins, in a particular manner, in praying for all sinners. And if he should neglect this opportunity, what may he not justly fear from his re-

peated treasons ; from the wrath of God above ready to fall upon him ; from the mouth of hell below, gaping to devour him ; from the devil, to whom he has sold himself ; and from that monster mortal sin (which is even worse than the devil) which he always carries about with him. O sinners, neglect not these days of salvation, lest they never return to you any more. Now is your time, hereafter there may be no time for you.

Consider 3dly, the encouragement we have, both in the epistle and the gospel of the Rogations, to look for mercy, and for all good, both for ourselves and for our neighbours, from humble and fervent prayer. In the epistle (St. James v.) we are taught the great efficacy of continual prayer, with an exhortation to pray for one another, in order to salvation ; and a declaration of what the reward will be of them that contribute to the salvation of others. In the gospel (St. Luke xi.) we are exhorted by Christ our Lord, to a holy importunity and perseverance in prayer ; and we are taught, by the example of a friend, and of a father, to look for good gifts from our heavenly Father, by the means of earnest prayer. O what a friend indeed, what a parent have we in him ! or who is like to him in bounty and mercy ? Let us then be encouraged by these divine oracles, *to go with confidence at this time to the throne of grace : that we may obtain mercy, and find grace in seasonable aid*, Heb. iv. 16.

Conclude to join at this time with the whole church of God in prayer and penance, that thou mayest obtain mercy both for thyself and for thy neighbours. Heaven can never resist a general assault, made by the whole people of God, by the means of prayer, when joined with a contrite and humble heart.

*Rogation Monday.**On the Means of attaining to the Love of God.*

CONSIDER first, that, as the desire of wisdom is the true beginning of wisdom ; so the first step to the love of God (which is true wisdom indeed) is an earnest desire to love God. *Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after this heavenly justice ; for they shall be filled*, Matt. v. This desire makes us pray fervently, seek incessantly, knock earnestly, at the gate of divine love. It makes us rise early in quest of this heavenly wisdom : it makes us glad to part with all things else, that we may purchase this precious pearl, that we may acquire this incomparable treasure. He that, with this desire, aspires after divine love, already begins to possess what he desires : and the more he relishes the sweetness of what he begins to possess, the more he aspires after it. Thus the desire of love begets love : and love begets a stronger desire, which begets a stronger love. So that the great means of learning to love God is, by repeated desires and acts of love, to taste and see how sweet God is ; and how sweet a thing it is to love him. •

Consider 2dly, that divine love will not be found by us, nor come to dwell in our souls, if we take no care to keep our inward house clean and pure for our beloved. *Blessed are the clean of heart ; for they shall see God*, Matt. v. So that, if we entertain in our interior any irregular company ; that is, if our affections are set upon worldly vanities, upon filthy lucre, upon sensual pleasures, upon gratifying our corrupt inclinations, divine love will not come near us : because it cannot endure such unclean company as this is, nor dwell in a soul that is enslaved to worldly desires and disorderly passions. There are to be parted with, or at least brought into order and subjection, if we would learn to love God. This is the meaning of that gospel lesson of selling all, to acquire the precious pearl of the

kingdom of God, by his love's reigning in our souls. The kingdom of divine love will allow of no rival, no usurper, no rebel in its dominions. The spouse of divine love must belong wholly to her Spouse alone; she must be a *garden close shut*, to all others, a *fountain sealed up*, for him alone, *Cantic. iv.* So that another necessary means of attaining to divine love, is a general mortification of all foreign and irregular affections.

Consider 3dly, that the sovereign means of acquiring divine love, is the daily exercise of mental prayer, which employs all the powers of the soul in waiting upon God. Here the *memory* represents all the motives we have to love him: here the *understanding* is taught to know him: here the affections of the *will* are enflamed at his presence: this then is the true school of love. O my soul, let us daily frequent it; not only by having a regular time fixed for this great exercise of love, but by practising it in some measure at all times; by a spirit of recollection; by a continual sense and remembrance of God's presence; by frequently calling back the soul to him from all her distractions and evagations; by repeated aspirations and ejaculations of love, &c. This is *walking with God* indeed, like the ancient saints; this is taking God along with us, wherever we are going, and whatever we are doing; this is *walking in love*. O how happy is that life which is thus dedicated to divine love!

Conclude to embrace all the means that may bring thee to this happiness. O begin now from this hour to set out in quest of this fountain of life! Let no opposition of earth or hell discourage thee. Never leave off thy search, till thou come to drink of this heavenly water, which will become in thee a *fountain springing up to everlasting life*.

Rogation Tuesday.

On Acts of Divine Love.

CONSIDER first, that the love of God is like a fire : its nature is to be always in motion, and always tending upwards, towards its heavenly element : it quickly expires, and dies, if it lies idle. Wherefore if we would keep it alive, we must nourish it, and blow it up, by frequent acts of love : and those not mere *verbal* acts, by telling God that we love him, whilst our heart perhaps is far from him ; but by the *real* exercise of *loving* God, both in *our heart*, and in *our works*. We exercise the love of God in *our heart*, by affection ; we exercise the love of God in *our works*, by effects. We love God with a love of *chaste concupiscence*, when in *heart* and *work*, we tend to him as *our sovereign good*, and aspire after the eternal enjoyment of him. We love him with a love of *benevolence*, that is, of sincere and perfect friendship and charity, when both in *heart* and *work* we give our whole selves, with all our thoughts, words, and deeds, and all things else, to him, as being *infinitely good in himself*. It is just we should exercise ourselves in acts of the love of God in both these ways, as in both these ways he is infinitely amiable ; but more especially that we should tend to love him with the *love of benevolence*, by giving ourselves, and all things, to him.

Consider 2dly, that *benevolence* is a love, by which we wish all manner of good to the person beloved : a love, by which we earnestly seek and procure whatever may be for his honour, interest, or pleasure : by which we delight in all his advantages, and are concerned at all his losses, &c. Wherefore, if we would make proper acts of the *love of benevolence* towards God, we must desire, seek, and procure, as much as lies in us, the greater honour and glory of his name, and the propagation of his kingdom, both in our own hearts, and throughout the whole world ;

and pray that all men may know him, love him, and serve him : we must rejoice at every thing that is agreeable to his holy will, and be concerned at every thing that offends him. This is the proper exercise of the love of benevolence ; these are far better acts of divine charity, than merely telling God that we love him. My soul, what are thy dispositions ? Dost thou sincerely desire, and heartily pray, that all the world may know, love, and serve thy God ? that all his creatures, in heaven and earth, may give perpetual glory to him : that the reign of sin may be abolished ; and that the kingdom of God may take possession of all hearts : that none may resist or rebel against his orders ; but that all may embrace, and bow down, and adore his divine will ? If so, there is no doubt but thou lovest God. Such as these are perfect acts of the love of God.

Consider 3dly, that the exercise of the love of God, which, above all others, is recommended in holy scriptures, is the loving of his divine law, and the keeping of his commandments. *This is the charity* (that is, the love) *of God, that we keep his commandments, 1 John v. 3. He that keepeth his word, in him, in very deed, the charity of God is perfected, chap. ii. 5.* The beloved disciple continually recommends the acts of this kind of divine love : and the Psalms are full of aspirations, or breathings of a soul that is in love with the holy law and commandments of God. This devotion to the commandments of God, is loving God indeed, with a true and effectual love : because it is giving up, for his sake, what is most dear to us, viz. our own will and liberty, and making a present of it to him : it is giving him what he chiefly calls for at our hands : whatsoever else we give him, can never content him. He always preferred the sacrifice of obedience before all other sacrifices ; because here we sacrifice to him our own dear will, and immolate it, as it were, to his honour and glory. This kind of love is the safest from illusions : for whosoever loves the

commandments of God, and his divine will, and makes all that is in him submit thereunto, most certainly loves God, and is in the right way that will bring him safe to God. No other devotion, without this, can secure any man.

Conclude to exercise thyself daily in all these ways of loving God : and ever remember, that loving God, and keeping his commandments, go always hand in hand : because we cannot love God without loving his will, notified to us by his commandments.

Rogation Wednesday.

On other Exercises of the Love of God.

CONSIDER first, that divine love is also exercised in the penitential way, by souls that, like Magdalen (of whom our Lord pronounced that *many sins were forgiven her, because she loved much*) go daily to the feet of Christ in spirit, to wash them with their tears, flowing from a heart full of a sense of the infinite goodness of God, and of a deep regret for having offended that infinite goodness by their sins. This exercise of *penitential love*, as we see in the case of Magdalen, is most acceptable to our Lord, and most effectual for obtaining the discharge of all our sins; and, if diligently pursued, is capable of advancing even those that have been the greatest sinners, to a high degree of virtue and sanctity. And whosoever has forfeited his baptismal innocence by mortal sin, if he would follow the rules of Christian prudence, in choosing the safest way, where his all is at stake, should endeavour to pursue this exercise of *penitential love*, and never end it but with his life. Thus did all those great penitents of old, who became afterwards such glorious saints. And this kind of exercise of love will become in a thanner natural, to all such as have a right sense of what God is, and what sin is; and of the dreadful evil they have been guilty of in offending, though it were but once in their life, so great and so good a God.

Consider 2dly, that there are also other ways of

mourning, in which we may exercise a love of God, most agreeable to him, and beneficial to ourselves. As, when we sit down at the foot of the cross, and there contemplating the extreme anguish and distress, the stripes and wounds, the racking pains and torments of our dear Redeemer, with all that complication of pains and sufferings in all kinds, which he endured in his passion, for the love of us, we excite in our souls suitable affections of an ardent love, in the way of compassion for our crucified lover, and feed this fire with tears, flowing at the sight of his blood; which, as it shews forth, in the most sensible manner, his tender affection for us, so it most strongly calls for a return of our love, accompanied with a bitter grief to see our beloved treated with so much cruelty and contempt. Upon the same principle of the concern that every true lover has to see the outrages offered to his beloved, we may also exercise a love most agreeable to our Lord, in mourning for the innumerable sins that are daily committed against him throughout the whole world: to see his infinite goodness slighted; his sacred laws and ordinances trodden under foot; his mercies continually abused, and his most adorable majesty treated with the utmost contempt by poor blind mortals, made by him, and for him; redeemed by the blood of his Son, and loaded with innumerable favours, to engage them to love him and serve him. Oh! how can any true lover of God endure to see these outrages offered to his infinite majesty, without having his heart perfectly broken with grief, to see his love thus abused.

Consider 3dly, that, besides these exercises of the *love of benevolence*, in the *penitential* and *compassionate* way, there is another most perfect exercise of love, and which comes the nearest to the love of the blessed in heaven; and that is, in the way of *joy* and *congratulation*: as when we rejoice in God and in his boundless perfections: when we are delighted to think that he is what he is; infinitely good, infi-

nately holy, infinitely happy, infinitely perfect : that he is the sovereign Lord of all ; and that nothing can be added to him, because he is every way infinite. O what a comfort, what a pleasure, what a joy it is to a true lover of God, to think that whatsoever may come to himself, or to any other thing in the world, his love at least, whom he loves without comparison more than himself, and all things else, will always be infinitely glorious, infinitely rich, and infinitely happy ! O how like is this love to that of the blessed, even to that love that makes them blessed, which is an eternal joy in God, and in all the beauties and perfections they contemplate in him : this is their eternal delight.

Conclude to dedicate thyself, for time and eternity, to this most perfect love of God. Make it thy employment here, and it will be thy eternal reward hereafter. In the meantime, labour also to promote, as much as thou canst, upon every occasion, the praise and glory of thy Maker, the interests of his kingdom, the fulfilling of all his wills, as well in thyself, as in all others ; be concerned at every thing that displeases him ; put thy heart continually in his hands ; give thyself, and all things else to him, a hundred times in the day. Such acts as these, frequently repeated in the day, will insure to thee the rich treasure of divine love : by such exercises, thou wilt effectually choose the better part, which will never be taken from thee.

*Ascension-Day.**On the Ascension of our Lord.*

CONSIDER first, that our Lord, after having employed forty days upon earth, to comfort and encourage his disciples ; to confirm them in the faith of his resurrection ; and to instruct them in the mysteries of his kingdom : on the fortieth day, taking them out with him to Mount Olivet, lifted up his hands, and gave them his blessing ; and so ascended up visibly to heaven, before their eyes, till a cloud

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interposed, and took him out of their sight. Bow thyself down, my soul, to receive with joy and gratitude this blessing of thy Saviour, *ascending now to his Father, and to thy Father*: follow him in spirit, and contemplate the triumphs and joy of all the heavenly legions, that come out to meet him, and attend him to his Father's throne: see how he brings along with him all the patriarchs, prophets, and spirits of the just, into those regions of eternal bliss, and presents them to his Father, as the first fruits of his purchase, which he had made upon earth, with his precious blood. See with joy thy human nature, in the person of thy Lord, raised above all the Cherubims and Seraphims; and seated at the right hand of God: and exercise thyself upon this occasion, in acts of love, in the way of congratulation, and of rejoicing at the exaltation, and at the triumphs of thy Saviour.

Consider 2dly, that our Lord, by his ascension, has taken possession of the kingdom of heaven, not only for himself, but also for us. He purchased this kingdom for us with his own blood: he opened the gates of it by his death: he shewed us the way to it by his resurrection; and, by his ascension, has given us, as it were, an earnest of our coming one day to reign there with him. He is our head; we are his members: it is but natural that where the head is, there the members should also be: it would be unnatural; it would be keeping them in a state of violence; to keep them separate from their head. What comfort then to Christian souls to see their head, by this mystery of his ascension into heaven, raised to the highest seat in that eternal kingdom; in order to draw them thither after him; and, in the meantime, preparing a place for them there: that he may, in proper time, come and *take them to himself, that where he is, they also may be*, St. John xiv.

Consider 3dly, what further motives we have for rejoicing in the ascension of our Lord, when we reflect that he has entered into heaven, in quality of

our parent, of our friend, of our advocate, and mediator; of our high priest, &c. O what encouragements are here to raise our hopes! We have a tender Father in heaven, the true parent of our souls, who has all power in the court of heaven, and takes exceedingly to heart our true interest: we have there, in the person of our Redeemer, a most affectionate friend, who loves us with an incomparable love: we have a most faithful mediator and advocate, who ever pleads for us with the powerful eloquence of his sacred wounds, which he continually represents to his Father in our behalf: we have a high-priest, who, to make atonement for us, has carried into this heavenly sanctuary, not the blood of oxen, or of goats, but his own most sacred blood, shed for obtaining for us an everlasting redemption. O see, my soul, upon how many accounts thou oughtest to rejoice on this festival of the ascension of thy Lord, if thou either lovest him, or thyself.

Conclude to consider this festival of the ascension of our Lord, as one of the principal solemnities of the year. The church of God considers it as such, and therefore daily commemorates, in a particular manner, in the most sacred mysteries, not only the passion and resurrection, but also the ascension of her heavenly spouse; as the mystery which put the last seal as it were to the great work of our redemption; and placed this flesh of ours in heaven, even at the right hand of the Father, which, at the fall of our first parents, had been sentenced to return to its original earth.

Friday after the Ascension.

On the Lessons we are to learn from the Ascension of our Lord.

CONSIDER first, that as we ought to imitate the resurrection of the Lord, by a *spiritual resurrection* from the death of sin to the life of grace; so we must also imitate the *ascension* of our Lord, by a

spiritual ascension into heaven, and by dwelling there in spirit with him; that, as we hope one day to ascend thither after him in effect, we may learn the way, by ascending after him, every day in affection. Our Lord has told us, that *where our treasure is, there our heart shall also be*. Our treasure is that which we love the most and the best of all things; now if this be Christ, as it ought to be, as he is ascended into heaven, our treasure is in heaven; and therefore, our heart should follow its treasure, by ascending after him in spirit, into heaven, and by fixing there its abode with its beloved. O happy *ascension of love*, which teaches the soul to find in some measure a heaven upon earth; and interiorly, to have always her conversation in heaven, whatever occupation, or company, she may be exteriorly engaged in upon earth!

Consider 2dly, that, in order to be qualified to ascend after Christ our Lord into heaven, we must first get rid of our vices, and criminal passions: for none of these can be admitted into that blessed abode: there is no room for them there. *The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, the pride of life*, can have no place in heaven: all their pursuits are earthly: instead of carrying the soul upwards towards heaven, they press her down towards hell. They are all slaves to Satan; they bind the poor soul fast in his chains; they will not suffer her to follow after Christ; they are his mortal enemies. See then, my soul, if none of these have dominion over thee: see if pride, avarice, passion, or lust, have not more influence on thee, to keep thee afar off from Christ, in this region of sin and death, than the love of God has to draw thee up to heaven after him. O beg of thy Lord, through his triumphant ascension, by which, *ascending on high, he led captivity captive: he gave gifts to men*, (*Eph. iv. 8.*) that he would break all thy bonds in sunder, which keep thee from ascending after him; and, by the precious gifts of his grace,

set thee at liberty, to fly upwards with the wings of the dove, till thou canst come to repose in him, and with him.

Consider s^dly, that the soul can never be rightly qualified to fly up towards heaven, by this spiritual ascension, as long as her wings, that is her affections, are not disengaged. For as the bird cannot fly if its wings be either entangled or daubed over with bird-lime; so the soul cannot fly, if her affections are either entangled in the nets of the world, or defiled with the bird-lime of a misplaced love. So that it is not enough for a soul that desires to ascend to heaven after Christ, to be free from downright lust, or other scandalous excesses and passions; but she must also be disengaged in her affections, from every love of person, or thing, that ties her down, as it were, to the earth; that captivates her thoughts; that fills her with solitudes and perplexities; or otherwise takes off her heart from the love of God. All such love as this disqualifies the soul from flying towards heaven; it keeps her far below, grovelling in the mire. Nor let her flatter herself that her affections are innocent, because the object is not of itself criminal: for let the object be what it will, it is a crime to prefer it to God; or to love it so, as to forfeit, for its sake, the love of God.

Conclude to be jealous of thyself how thou placest thy affections here upon earth; lest they hinder thy flight towards thy treasure in heaven: *My love is my weight*, says St. Augustine, *that way am I carried, whithersoever I am carried.*

Saturday after the Ascension.

Other Lessons to be learnt from the Ascension of our Lord.

CONSIDER first, that as, in consequence of the ascension of our Lord, we ought to be daily carried, as it were, upon the wings of love, up to him in his heavenly kingdom; so we ought, by this frequent ascending thither, to be daily more and more

enamoured with that kingdom of love; to conceive the highest ideas of that incomprehensible happiness of the soul's being there eternally united to her God, and absorpt in him; and with the most ardent desires, to long daily more and more for this fountain of life. But what then must the sentiments of the soul be, when, after she has begun, by the practice of this devotion, to relish something of the sweetness of the good things of her Lord in the land of the living, she finds herself still a prisoner in this foreign land, in this earthly Babylon? O how does she wish to be delivered from this captivity! To see an end of this long pilgrimage! How does she lament her banishment in this vale of tears; at so great a distance from her true country! How does she despise this miserable world, and even loath its choicest enjoyments! O my soul that these were our sentiments!

Consider 2dly, and give ear to the exhortation of the apostle, *Coloss. iii. 1, &c. If you be risen with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is sitting at the right hand of God: mind the things that are above, not the things that are on the earth. For you are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ shall appear, who is your life, then shall you also appear with him in glory.* How happy are those Christians that enter into these sentiments; upon occasion of the ascension of our Lord: who consider Christ as the great object of their love, and their true life; and, as he is in heaven, sitting at the right hand of God, turn all their intentions and affections towards heaven: who consider this their true life as absent, and as hidden from them here below; and therefore, continually aspire after that happy revolution, when they shall cease to die, and begin to live! And, in the meantime, whilst they remain in this region of death, they seek, as much as they can, to divest themselves of *this body of death*, by mortifying, as the apostle admonishes, *their members that are upon earth*; and by crucifying the flesh, with its vices and concupiscences.

Consider 3dly, that, as we are informed by church history, our Lord, at his ascension, left the last prints of his feet upon the top of Mount Olivet, in the place from whence he ascended; which no length of time, nor encampments of armies, or other accidents, or even industry of man, could ever efface, or cover over: that we might learn, that the true way for all that desire to follow Christ, by ascending after him into heaven, is to have his footsteps always before their eyes, and to walk in them, by a diligent imitation of his life and conversation. They that are careful to walk in his footsteps are his *disciples indeed*: and they that are his *disciples indeed*, will infallibly, if they persevere, ascend to heaven after him, and be for ever with him.

Copelude to lay up in thy heart all these lessons, which Christ desires to teach thee in his ascension: and so to adhere to his footsteps, that nothing in life or death may ever separate thee from him.

Sunday within the Octave of the Ascension.

On the Precept of Charity to our Neighbours.

CONSIDER first, that, after that greatest and first commandment, of *loving God with our whole heart and soul*, the next of all the divine precepts is, *Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself*. This, saith our Lord, is *like to the other*: and indeed it has so necessary a connexion with it, that we cannot fulfil the one without the other. *God is charity*, says the beloved disciple, (1 John iv. 16.) *and he that abideth in charity, abideth in God, and God in him*. And again, *he that loveth not (his neighbour) knoweth not God; for God is charity*, v. 8. And again, *if any man say, I love God, and hateth his neighbour, he is a liar*, v. 20. These two precepts of charity, by which we are commanded, in the first place, to love God above all things; and, in the next place, to love our neighbours as ourselves, contain an abridgment of the whole duty of a Christian. They are two branches that spring from the same root,

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and belong to the self-same divine virtue: because the same motives that oblige us to love God for his own goodness sake, oblige us also to love all that are made after his image, and redeemed by the blood of his Son, for the sake of their Maker and Redeemer. It is he that requires this love of us; and requires it in such manner, as that we should love him in our neighbours, and love them in him. O the infinite goodness and bounty of our God! that, notwithstanding the immense distance there is betwixt us and him, he should be pleased to put us, as it were, upon an equality, by requiring that we should love one another, with the like love, and upon the same motive, as we love himself.

Consider 2dly, that this charity to our neighbours is so essentially necessary to salvation, that, without it, though we spoke with the tongues of men and angels, and had the gift of prophecy, and all knowledge of the deepest mysteries, and faith strong enough even to remove mountains, we should still be nothing; and though we should give our whole substance to the poor, and our bodies to the flames, it would profit us nothing, saith St. Paul, 1 Cor. xiii. *He that loveth not, saith St. John, abideth in death, 1 John iii. 14. He is in darkness, and walketh in darkness, and knoweth not whither he goeth; because the darkness hath blinded his eyes, chap. ii. 11.* And this charity, which is so necessary to salvation, must be general; for, as we learn from our Lord in the parable of the good Samaritan, (St. Luke x.) all men, without exception of nations or opinions, are here to be considered as our neighbours: and if there should be any one mortal, whom we should exclude from our charity, our heavenly Father would exclude us from his mercy. St. Matt. xviii. 35.

Consider 3dly, how much our Lord takes to heart, that we should have this mutual love and charity for one another. He has made it his favourite commandment; the very badge by which he would have his disciples known and distinguished. *I give a new*

commandment, saith he, (St. John xiii. 34, 35.) *that you love one another, as I have loved you.—By this shall all men know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.* And (chap. xv. 12.) *This is my commandment, that you love one another, as I have loved you.* And this mutual love for one another, he desires may be so perfect, that, it may, in some measure, resemble the love and union that there is between him and his Father: as he has declared in that heavenly prayer he made for his disciples, St. John xvii. 20, 21. *And not for them only,* said he, *do I pray, but for them also, who, through their word, shall believe in me: that they all may be one, as thou, Father, in me, and I in thee: that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.* This mutual love, this union and charity, he inculcates in these strong terms, in this last conference, of his mortal life, with his beloved disciples; that both they and we might consider it as his last dying injunction; and as a most precious legacy, which he has bequeathed to us all. O, my soul, embrace this legacy of love, which has been thus left thee by thy Lord, dying for the love of thee.

Conclude to prove thyself henceforward to be a disciple of Christ indeed, by this spirit of universal charity for all; as he died out of charity for all. In the beginning of the church *the multitude of the believers had but one heart, and one soul,* Acts iv. 32. Such was their mutual love and union. O, blessed charity, when shall we see thee once more reign in this manner amongst Christians?

Monday within the Octave of the Ascension.

On the Excellence of fraternal Charity.

CONSIDER first, that charity is the queen of virtues, and the most excellent of them all, according to the doctrine of the apostle, (1 Cor. xiii. 13.) and this not only as she loves God in himself, but also as she loves him in our neighbours, by loving

them for his sake : for, as the motive is the same in both these loves, so, the virtue is the same. Hence St. Peter calls upon all Christians, *1 Peter iv. 8. BEFORE ALL THINGS have a constant mutual charity: for charity covereth the multitude of sins.* And St. Paul, *Coloss. iii. 14. ABOVE ALL these THINGS have charity, which is the bond of perfection.* He adds, (*Rom. xiii. 8. 10.*) that the love of our neighbours is the fulfilling the law and commandments of God : and, (*Gal. v. 14.*) that *all the law is fulfilled in this one word: thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.* Hence also St. John, the beloved disciple, both in his words, and in his writings, continually inculcated this duty of loving of another, as the favourite virtue of Jesus Christ; and, in a manner, the whole duty of a Christian. O, my soul, let us then embrace, with all our affections, this amiable virtue, this chief favourite of Christ and his Saints: let us value it as an inestimable treasure: and be ever willing rather to lose any thing else than this blessed charity.

Consider 2dly, that we may with truth apply to charity, what the wise man writes of wisdom; that *all good things came to him together with her, and innumerable riches through her hands,* (*Wisd. vii. 11.*) what these riches are that come through the hands of charity, we learn from the apostle, (*1 Cor. xiii. 4, &c.*) *Charity is patient, is kind: charity envieth not; dealeth not perversely; is not puffed up; is not ambitious; seeketh not her own: (that is, she is not selfish) she is not provoked to anger: she thinketh no evil: she rejoiceth not in iniquity, (that is, in any thing that is wrong) but rejoiceth with the truth: (being pleased with all that is right and true) she beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things, &c.* See, my soul, how many virtues are the constant attendants, and offspring of charity. O how amiable is this character of the truly charitable Christian! O how lovely is this parent of all this heavenly train!

Consider 3dly, that charity, in the strictest sense,

is indeed a heavenly virtue: as well because she maintains her ground in heaven, and receives her full perfection there, where faith and hope are no more: (*Charity, saith the apostle, 1 Cor xiii. 1. never faileth away,*) as also because the eternal charity of the Saints is no small part of their heavenly happiness: their love of God is their essential bliss; their love of one another in God, and the joy that they conceive at one another's happiness, multiplies, as I may say, their heaven, to as many fold, as there are happy spirits and Saints in heaven. And no wonder, since charity, even here below, when it is perfect, brings with it unspeakable joy, and, in a manner, a heaven upon earth; by keeping all the passions under, and establishing the reign of peace and joy in the soul. As, on the other hand, where there is no charity, the passions are all let loose; hatred, envy, jealousy, revenge, &c. the soul is always in a storm; she is a stranger to peace; she is in confusion and darkness; and the very image of hell; where it is no small part of their misery that they cannot love.

Conclude to aspire, as much as thou art able, after this heavenly charity: she will teach thee, whilst thou art here upon earth, to emulate the love of the blessed in heaven: she alone will bring thee to their happy company.

Tuesday within the Octave of the Ascension.

On the Exercise of fraternal Charity.

CONSIDER first, that the charity which we owe to our neighbours, like that by which we love God, is in the nature of a fire, which is ever in motion; and must be kept alive by its being nourished with its proper fuel, by the means of repeated acts; and these not exercised only by affection, but by effects: *My little children, saith St. John, (1 John iii. 15.) let us love, not in word, nor in tongue; but in deed, and in truth.* Fraternal charity is not a love of concupiscence; it is not a selfish love, that looks no further than at the honour, profit, or pleasure, which

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may accrue to one's self from our neighbours; it is a love of sincere *benevolence*: now as it is the nature of the love of *benevolence*, to desire, to seek, to procure, and to promote, whatever may be for the real good of the person beloved: to be delighted with all that is to his advantage: and to be concerned at all that hurts him; so this *benevolent love*, which we owe to our neighbours, by virtue of the precept of fraternal charity, is to be kept alive in our souls, by repeated acts of its own kind; by frequently exercising, in favour of our neighbours, as well the spiritual, as the corporal works of mercy; with a pure intention of God's glory and their welfare; by bewailing their errors and vices; by earnestly praying for their conversion and salvation; and neglecting nothing in our power to procure it. Do we evidence our charity for our neighbours by the exercise of such acts as these?

Consider 2dly, that the love of *true charity*, which we are commanded to bear to our neighbours, is to love them for God's sake; to love them in God: and in order to God. Fraternal charity is a branch of that same divine virtue, by which we love God; and ought ever to be grounded upon the same divine motive, of God's own infinite goodness. No carnal, worldly, or natural affection, influenced by flesh and blood, or by any other consideration but God, can be called *charity*. If then we would fulfil this great precept, we must not content ourselves with loving our neighbours at any rate: heathens and publicans often love one another, and assist one another, and yet they are void of divine charity. But we must love according to God; and with relation to God: we must love in our neighbours the image of God: we must consider them as made by him, and for him; and as redeemed by the precious blood of his Son: we must love them for his sake; and because it is his holy will and commandment. And we must exercise the acts of this love, by contributing, on every occasion, all that lies in us, to bring them to

the love of God here, and to his kingdom hereafter ; that they may glorify him in a happy eternity. This is truly charity indeed.

Consider 3dly, by what *rules* we are to be directed and regulated, in the exercise of the love of our neighbours. The *old commandment* of the divine law was to love every neighbour as ourselves. The *new commandment* of the gospel of Christ, is to love every neighbour, even as Christ has loved us, John xiii. 34. Have we ever seriously reflected upon the perfection of the love which these rules require of us? *To love our neighbours as ourselves*: O how tender is the love we bear ourselves! how intent upon our own welfare! how sensible of every thing that we apprehend as an evil to us! Is the love of our neighbours any thing like this? Do we treat them as we would desire to be treated ourselves? Do we wish them the same good as we wish ourselves? Are we concerned at the evils which befall them, as if they had befallen ourselves? I fear we cannot say it. Again: *To love our neighbours as Christ has loved us*. O what a love was this! He has laid down his very life for the love of us: and this without any desert on our side: for we deserved nothing but hell: we were his enemies by sin. Can our love for our neighbours stand the test of this rule? Are we willing to part with so much as our own humour, our convenience, our inclination, our pleasure, or satisfaction, for the love of our neighbours, and rather than give them occasion of grief, or sin? If not, how far are we from loving our neighbours as Christ has loved us!

Conclude to exercise daily repeated acts of fraternal charity, both in the affective, and the effective way: lest otherwise thy love for thy neighbours, for want of nourishment, quickly languish away and die. Have thy eye always upon those two great rules of charity; and regulate thy love by them.

Wednesday within the Octave of the Ascension.

On the different Branches of fraternal Charity.

CONSIDER first, that charity is fruitful in its offspring, and spreads itself into different branches; in order to make the whole man perfect: by regulating both his judgment, and his will; and directing him in his thoughts, in his words, and in his actions. For there is a charity that corrects the natural bent of our corruption, which is ever tending to suspect, and *judge* the worst of our neighbours: and to be harsh, and censorious in their regard. And there is a charity that inclines the will in their favour, so as to wish them well in every respect, and to forgive all injuries. There is a charity that employs the thoughts, in studying to promote their good, and to prevent and remedy their evils: and there is a charity that directs the tongue, and restrains it from uttering any words to the prejudice of any one. In fine, there is a charity that seasons and sweetens the whole body of our actions, as far as they relate to our neighbours; and squares them all, according to that golden rule, of doing in every thing as we would be done by. The practice of all these branches of charity in God, and for God, makes a perfect Christian, and brings to God.

Consider 2dly, that, amongst the branches of fraternal charity, there is one that our Lord seems to take in a special manner to heart; insomuch that he has declared our eternal lot shall be decided by our diligence, or negligence, in the exercise of it, (*Matt. xxv.*) and this is *charity to the poor*. These he declares he has substituted in his own stead; and what we do for them, he takes as done for himself, *v. 43, 45.* This branch of charity, duly exercised, in proportion to every man's circumstances, will bring thousands one day into the happy tabernacles of everlasting life. But where shall the unjust stewards then appear, who, having the substance of their master, *viz.* their worldly riches, entrusted in their

hands, with express orders to employ their superfluities at least, in relieving the necessity of his poor children; either covetously detain, or prodigally squander away that which should be their support; and to which they have an indisputable title? Alas! what a figure will their extravagant expences then make! What account will they be able to give of all that they have sacrificed to pride and vanity; to luxury and intemperance; to gaming and criminal diversions! Will not all these robberies of the substance of the poor cry to heaven against them for vengeance at that day?

Consider 3dly, that there is still another branch of charity, the most difficult of all, and yet absolutely necessary to salvation, and that is to love our enemies. *I say to you*, saith our Lord, (*Matt. v. 44.*) *love your enemies; do good to them that hate you; and pray for them that persecute and calumniate you.* And this he insists upon in such manner, as to exclude from his mercy here, and from his kingdom hereafter, all such as exclude any one, how much an enemy soever, from their charity. But how shall we acquire, or how shall we practise, this charity for our enemies? O! it is not a virtue of our own growth: it must come down to us from heaven, from our great Father, *who maketh his sun to rise upon the good and bad, and raineth upon the just and the unjust.* It is by fervent prayer we must obtain it; and when we have got it, must lay it up in our hearts as a rich heavenly treasure: and exercise it, as the saints have done, by praying for our enemies in sincerity of heart, and seeking on all occasions, to overcome, in their regard, evil with good. O how happy shall we be, if, by any such means as these, we prevail to bring them, that before were our enemies, to be, for the time to come, friends both to God and to us? It is what the saints have often done by their charity, by their meekness, and by their prayers.

Conclude to labour, with all thy power, both to

acquire, and to exercise all these branches of charity, if thou desirest to come to God, who is charity, and who is not to be come at but by charity.

Thursday the Octave of the Ascension.

On the great Pattern of Charity.

CONSIDER first, how Christ Jesus our Lord has given us himself for a pattern of perfect charity, in the parable of the good Samaritan, (*Luke x.*) He himself came down in person from his throne above, to save poor man, who had unhappily fallen among the infernal robbers; and was stript by them of all grace; and grievously wounded in all his faculties. He was the good shepherd, that came down to seek with sorrow the lost sheep, in order to lay him upon his own shoulders, and carry him home, with joy, to his heavenly fold. It is here we plainly discover the infinite charity both of the Father, and of the Son. *By this, hath the charity of God appeared towards us, says the beloved disciple, because God has sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we may live by him. In this is charity: not as though we had loved God, but because he hath first loved us, and sent his Son to be a propitiation for our sins, 1 John iv. 9, 10.*

Consider 2dly, that the whole life of Christ was a continual exercise of divine charity. From the first moment of his conception in the womb of his blessed mother, till his expiring on the cross, his soul was ever employed in loving his heavenly Father, and in offering himself to all his wills; and for the love of his Father, and because it was his Father's will, he dedicated his whole life also to the love of us; ever thinking on us, praying for us, and labouring for our eternal salvation. But O the infinite charity he has shewn us in all that he endured in his passion and death for the love of us! Christians, pass over in your minds all the stages of his passion, from his prayer and agony in the garden, to his expiring on the cross: and see the multitude, and variety of tor-

ments, he has there suffered for us. Ah! how much have our sins cost this innocent Lamb of God! Ah! how dearly has he loved us! O, my soul, in the midst of all these tortures he had thee in his heart: and, even then, was pleading thy cause, with his eternal Father, when, by thy sins, thou wast crucifying him. O what return shall we make him for this infinite love!

Consider 3dly, that the Son of God has not only loved us, during the whole course of his mortal life; and loved us even to death, by laying down his life for the love of us: but he has carried his love for us beyond the bounds of death, in an admirable legacy, which he has bequeathed us, the night before his passion; by means of which, to satisfy his love, he remains always with us, in the divine mysteries; even to the end of the world. Here he feeds our souls with his precious body and blood: here he unites us to himself, in such manner as to abide in us, and we in him: here he is a perpetual source of grace, of love, and of true life to our souls: here he communicates himself to us, like the manna of heaven, for the support of our pilgrimage, till he brings us to the true land of promise; where he will lovingly give himself to us for all eternity. And shall not so much charity on his part, oblige us to dedicate also our whole souls to this divine virtue.

Conclude to have always before thy eyes this great pattern of love, that thou mayest learn from him, how thou art to love both thy God and thy neighbour.

N. B. *As the festivals of St. George, of St. Philip, and St. James, and of the finding of the Cross, usually fall between Easter and Ascension; we shall set down in this place the meditations that are to be read on those days.*

On St. George.

April 23. **C**ONSIDER first, that we know little more of the particulars of St. George's life, but that he was a Christian soldier, an illustrious martyr, and a glorious Saint. He was a soldier: we all ought to be soldiers of Christ. In our baptism, we have declared a perpetual war, with the world, with the flesh, and with the devil, as the mortal enemies of our great king, the king of kings, Jesus Christ; the mortal enemies of our true country, the heavenly Jerusalem; and the mortal enemies of our own dear souls: we have listed ourselves soldiers, in our confirmation, under the royal standard of the cross of Christ; and have obliged ourselves to bear him perpetual allegiance and fidelity. But have we fulfilled these engagements? Have we behaved ourselves as becomes the soldiers of Christ? Have we stood to our colours? Have we fought manfully the battles of our Lord? Or have we not rather deserted the cause? Have we not been rebels to our true king? Have we not changed sides, and preferred the following of the standard of Satan before that of Jesus Christ? O be confounded at your past disloyalties; and now, at least, return to your allegiance.

Consider 2dly, that St. George was a *martyr*: that is, a witness, to the divinity of Christ, and to the truth of his doctrine; by choosing rather to lay down his life, by the worst of torments, than to renounce Jesus Christ and his Gospel. We are all obliged to be witnesses also to Jesus Christ, and to his Gospel, both by our profession and by our lives. We are all obliged to be in a constant disposition of suffering death itself, rather than renounce our allegiance to Christ, by wilful sin. We must all make our way to heaven, through many tribulations and persecutions, in one shape or other: and so far we are all obliged to be martyrs. But alas! how far are we from the dispositions of the martyrs, who suffered cheerfully all kinds of torments for the love of Christ; when we

are so unwilling to suffer the least contradiction to our humour, or to part with any of our pleasures for the love of him; and are quickly overcome with every slight temptation?

Consider 3dly, that St. George, though living in the world in a condition of life, which one would think most opposite to sanctity, was, nevertheless, a glorious Saint. To teach us that sanctity is consistent with every lawful calling: and, that, if we are not Saints, the fault is not in the station of life in which Providence has placed us, but in our not corresponding with those graces, which God daily offers us, to sanctify us in our calling. It is the love of God, and of our neighbours, that makes Saints; and the more perfect this love is, the more perfect Saints. As then no lawful calling excludes the love, either of God, or of our neighbours; so no lawful calling can hinder us from being even eminent Saints, if we are truly desirous of it. The soldier that loves God better, is a greater Saint than the monk that loves himself less.

Conclude to aim, with all thy power, at this heavenly love, as St. George did; and he that crowned St. George will also crown thee: the best way to honour the Saints of God, is to love, and to imitate in them, that which made them Saints.

On St. Philip and St. James.

May 1. **C**ONSIDER first, that St. Philip and St. James were both disciples of Christ, trained up in his heavenly school. In quality of Christians, we ought all to be such, as the very name of a Christian signifies a *disciple*, that is, a scholar and follower of Jesus Christ. They were both called by Christ, and readily left all things else to follow him: and, from that time, inseparably adhered to him. How often have we also been called by him; by his interior graces? But have we ever yet followed him in earnest? Have we ever yet seriously renounced the love of the world; and every tie that offered to keep us

from him? Have we as yet ever stuck to him, so as to be his constant attendants? They were both chosen by Christ to be of the number of the twelve apostles: they were both zealous preachers of the faith; and, after gaining innumerable souls to God, they both sealed their doctrine with their blood. Happy we, if by our words or works, we can also be instrumental in gaining souls to God! Happy we, if we might suffer, or even lay down our lives, for so good a cause.

Consider 2dly, that St. Philip had no sooner found Christ, but he was willing to make his friend Nathaniel partaker of the same happiness; and therefore brought him also to Christ. This was friendship indeed: this was true charity, to take his friend with him to Christ. Alas! how many now a days engage their friends in a partnership of their errors and vices! How many lead them with them to their criminal diversions, or otherwise bring them into sin! But how few have the charity to carry them effectually to Christ? How few labour to reclaim them from the errors of their ways; and from the broad road, in which they are walking? How few suggest to their friends how they may find Christ, by a spiritual retreat, by a good general confession; by the daily practice of meditation, &c. This would be friendship indeed.

Consider 3dly, that St. James was remarkable for the great austerity of his life, and for his continual prayer. Do we desire to come to a share in his heavenly glory? The mortification of our own humours and passions; frequent voluntary self-denials, and a spirit of penance for our sins, joined with constant and fervent prayer, will bring us effectually to his company. We are told that, by reason of the great sanctity of his life, he alone was allowed to enter into the *Sancta Sanctorum*, or the inward sanctuary of the temple. But what was a much greater advantage to him, was, that he was allowed to enter into the true sanctuary of God, in his own interior, as

often as he pleased, and there to find him all alone, and to converse as familiarly with him as he pleased, by the means of mental prayer. This kind of entering into the sanctuary, God is both willing and desirous to allow to us all : and it is the practice of this, is the securest way to introduce us hereafter into his eternal sanctuary.

Conclude to honour, and to imitate, these blessed saints, in such manner, during thy mortal pilgrimage, that they may receive thee one day into the everlasting mansions of bliss.

On the Finding of the Cross.

May 3. **C**ONSIDER first, that on this day the Church of God, to honour the passion of Christ, celebrates the yearly memorial of the Finding of the Cross, that sacred instrument of our redemption, sanctified by the blood of the Son of God. This holy tree of life had lain long deep buried in the earth, and a statue of Venus had been erected by the infidels over the place; when the pious Empress St. Helen was inspired to seek after it, and at length happily discovered it, together with the title that had been fastened to it, and the nails with which our Lord had been pierced. This discovery of the cross of Christ was followed by illustrious miracles, to the greater glory of his name, who had humbled himself to the death of the cross for our redemption. Give thanks, Christians, for this miraculous finding of the cross of your Redeemer. Turn this day your devotion towards the triumphs of his sacred passion ; it was by the cross he was lifted up from the earth ; and beginning his reign from that tree, he drew all things to himself. O beg him now, by all his mercy, to draw at least your poor hearts to him !

Consider 2dly, the lessons we are to learn, by occasion of this festival : especially the dispositions we ought to be in, with regard to the cross. If we have not the courage to seek it, like St. Helen, at least

we ought to receive it, when, without our seeking, it comes to us from the hand of Providence ; and to lay it upon our shoulders, in order to follow him who redeemed us by the cross. O ! if we did but know the treasures of grace, and of comfort here, and of heavenly glory hereafter, which are laid up for us in the cross ; we should not only submit to it with patience, but embrace it with joy, as the inexhaustible source of all good, both for time and eternity. Christians, assure yourselves there is no going to heaven without a cross upon your shoulders. We must suffer with Christ, before we can reign with him.

Consider 3dly, that the cross is the school of all Christian virtues. As our Lord was pleased to give us most excellent lessons of them all, from *his* cross, so he gives us the means and opportunity of exercising them all, in the carriage of *our* crosses, which he allots us. Here we learn to imitate his perfect conformity to the will of his Father : here we learn to practise his humility, by humbling ourselves under the hand of God : here we learn the practice of his meekness, his patience, his charity for his enemies, and his obedience unto death ; and (that which is hardest of all for us to attain to) his preferring in practice the poverty, pain, and ignominy of the cross, before all the riches, pleasures, and honours of this world. O blessed school, in which we learn such heavenly lessons !

Conclude, if thou wouldst be a true disciple of Jesus Christ, not to fly from the cross, but to take it up willingly, wheresoever thou findest it, and follow him. O never be of the number of those unhappy Christians, whom the apostle laments *as enemies of the cross of Christ* : who, by indulging their passions and lusts, seek to bury the cross under the statue of Venus.

Friday after the Octave of the Ascension.

On preparing the Soul for the Holy Ghost.

CONSIDER first, that when we celebrate the Christian solemnities, we ought not only to honour the mysteries we commemorate, and give praise and glory to the Author of all good, for his benefits to his church; but also to enter into the spirit of the solemnity, by aiming, as much as possible, at the dispositions of soul which are suitable to the mysteries we celebrate. And thus, when we are preparing to keep the solemn feast of Pentecost, the day when the Holy Ghost came down upon the first Christians, it ought to be the great subject of our devotion, to prepare our souls for the Holy Ghost, that so we may be also favoured with his visit at this holy time, and may plentifully partake of his gifts and graces. O my soul, do thou aspire after this happiness (the greatest of any thou canst enjoy on this side of eternity) to have the Holy Ghost, the Spirit of the living God, to come to thee, to take full possession of thy interior, and to abide for ever with thee! O spare no pains in preparing a proper lodging for him.

Consider 2dly, how the Apostles prepared themselves for the Holy Ghost, *Acts i. 14. They were persevering, saith the scriptures, with one mind in prayer. And Luke xxiv. 53. They were always in the temple, praising and blessing God.* They prepared their souls for this heavenly guest by a spiritual exercise of ten days: they spent the whole time, from the Ascension of our Lord till Whitsunday, in recollection and prayer. Retired, as much as might be, from the hurry and distractions of a busy noisy world, they attended in silence to God and their souls. They were always at prayer in the temple of God; and, by that means they prepared their souls to be the temple of God. Happy they that endeavour to make the like preparation! Happy they that make it their practice to prepare themselves, every

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year, at this time, for the coming of the Holy Ghost, by a spiritual retreat of some days. If thy circumstances, O my soul, will not allow thee this retirement and solitude, therein to breathe the purer air of devotion, and to aspire, in a more suitable manner, after the coming of the Spirit of God ; at least wish for this happiness ; and, if thou canst do nothing more, at least, in the midst of all thy other employments, call in thy thoughts as often as thou canst, into thy closet within ; and there entertain thyself with thy God. Nothing will contribute more effectually to fix the Holy Ghost in thy soul, than this practice of aiming at an inward recollection in the midst of all thy works.

Consider sadly, that the great means to bring the Holy Ghost into our souls, is to invite him thither by ardent desires and fervent prayer. Thus the apostles obtained him : and the word of God, in many places, assures us, that this is the way for our obtaining all good : that our heavenly *Father will give his good Spirit to all that ask him*, (Luke xi. 13.) and that an ardent desire, a perfect hunger and thirst after this heavenly Spirit, the fountain of all justice, is the means to be filled with him and his gifts. *I wished*, says the wise man, (*Wisdom vii. 7.*) *and understanding was given me : and I called upon God, and the spirit of wisdom came upon me.* O my soul, see thou seek him in this manner, by fervent desires and prayer ; but let it be with thy whole heart. In finding him, thou wilt find all good : for he is the overflowing source of all good : without him thou art nothing but misery and sin. O come, divine Spirit, to my soul, that longs after thee, and bring with thee all thy heavenly treasures. O do thou prepare thyself a proper lodging in my heart, and then take full possession of it, for time and eternity.

Conclude to spare no pains in using all means in thy power, to engage this divine Spirit to come to visit thee, and to take up his abode with thee : fre-

quently invite him with the *veni Sancte Spiritus*, &c. a hymn that he himself has inspired. He willingly comes to those that sincerely and heartily invite him.

Whitsun-Eve.

On the Dispositions necessary for receiving the Holy Ghost.

CONSIDER first, that the soul, which desires to receive the Holy Ghost, must prepare a clean lodging to entertain him in: that is, a conscience and heart pure and clean from wilful sin. If any person of distinction were to honour us with a visit, and to take up a lodging with us, we should certainly take care to have our house clean; and to remove from the apartment, designed for him, whatsoever might offend his eyes: how much more, when we pretend to the honour and happiness of having the Spirit of God to abide with us, and in us; ought we to take care to have our inward house clean, and to remove from thence, by the virtue and sacrament of penance, the filth of sin, infinitely odious in his eyes? Alas! all the while the soul is under the guilt of mortal sin, not removed by a serious repentance and conversion to God, she is spiritually possessed by Satan: she is become a den of thieves, and carries as many devils about with her, as there are unruly passions, to which she is enslaved. And can she expect a visit from the Holy Ghost, without first ridding herself of such company? No: the Spirit of God can never reside in the same lodgings with sin and Satan.

Consider 2dly, those words of the wise man, *Wisd.* i. 4, 5. *Wisdom will not enter into a malicious soul, nor dwell in a body subject to sins. For the holy Spirit of discipline will flee from the deceitful.* And learn from hence, what sins have a more particular opposition to the visits of the Spirit of God; that, by the contrary dispositions, thou mayest prepare thy soul

for him. He is the Spirit of love, union, peace, and *charity*, and therefore cannot *enter into a malicious soul*. He is the Spirit of *purity*, and therefore cannot *dwell in a body subject to carnal sins*. He is the Spirit of *sincerity and truth*; and, therefore *will flee from all deceitful souls*, that is, from all double-dealers and hypocrites, that seek him not in simplicity of heart. Banish then far from thee all uncharitable animosities and rancour against thy neighbour; all wantonness and impurity; and all deceit and double dealing; if thou hopest to have any share in the Spirit of God.

Consider 3dly, that there is also an infinite opposition between the spirit of the world, and the Spirit of God; they cannot both reside in the same breast. *We have received*, says the apostle, (2 Cor. ii. 12.) *not the spirit of this world, but the Spirit that is of God*. The Paraclete, *the Spirit of Truth, whom the world cannot receive*, saith our Lord, John xiv. 17. For as the love of the world, and its friendship, is the great enemy of the love of God, (James iv. 4. and 1 John ii. 15.) so the spirit of the world is the great adversary of the Spirit of God. The spirit of the world, is a spirit of pride and vanity; it is selfish; it is fond of *mammon, the god of this world*, (2 Cor. iv. 5.) and of sensual pleasures, even to idolatry: the spirit of the world is a spirit of dissipation; ever forgetful of God and eternity, and full of disorderly affections to empty, vain, and perishable toys. And what room can there be for the Spirit of God in such a soul? No: the Spirit of God will not come anywhere, if he is not allowed to be supreme Lord and Master there. He will not admit of such worldly idols in his temple.

Conclude, if thou wouldst effectually invite the Holy Ghost to take up his residence in thy soul, to cleanse the heart thou designest for him, not only from all wilful sin, and affection to sin; but also from loving the world, and the things of the world;

and from every love or affection, that shall dare presume to claim any part of thy heart; so as to hinder thee from giving it all to him.

Whitsunday.

On the coming down of the Holy Ghost.

CONSIDER first, that, on the feast of Pentecost, when the disciples were all assembled together, suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a mighty wind coming; and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. And there appeared to them parted tongues, as it were of fire, and it sat upon every one of them; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they began to speak with diverse tongues, according as the Holy Ghost gave them to speak, Acts ii. 2, 3, 4. Thus they received the promised Comforter, with all his gifts and graces. Thus were they quite changed into other men. Weak and cowardly as they were before, they are now on a sudden courageous and perfect. They begin boldly to preach and to publish the faith and law of their crucified Lord; and bring thousands to embrace it. O, heavenly Spirit, how wonderful are thy operations! O when wilt thou work the like change in my soul! Christians, praise and bless your God, for sending down, in this manner, his holy Spirit upon his church; and for all the wonders that he wrought in the first establishment of it. The Israelites observed the solemnity of Pentecost, as one of the three principal feasts of the year; because on that day the old law was published from Mount Sinai, in thunder and lightning: how much more ought Christians religiously to observe this solemnity, because, on this day, the new law, of grace and love, was published on Mount Sion, by the coming down of the Holy Ghost, in tongues of fire! O! far more sweet and amiable flames!

Consider 2dly, that the Holy Ghost came down upon the Apostles, in the shape of tongues, to signify that he came to make them fit preachers of his word;

and to endow them with the gift of *tongues*, accompanied with heavenly wisdom, and understanding, of the mysteries of God, and all the gospel truths; to the end that they might be enabled to teach and publish, throughout the whole world, the faith and law of Christ. And these *tongues* were of *fire*, to signify how this divine Spirit sets those souls on fire, in which he abides; enflaming them with divine love; consuming the dross of their earthly affections; putting them in a continual motion of earnest desires and endeavours, to go forward from virtue to virtue, as fire is always in motion; and carrying them upwards towards the God of gods in his heavenly Sion; as the flame is always ascending upwards towards its element. O, blessed fire, when shall I partake of thy sacred flames? O come and take possession of my heart; consume all these bonds that tie it to the earth; and carry it up with thee, towards the heavenly furnace, from whence thou comest. Sweet Jesus, thou hast said, (*Luke xii. 49.*) *I am come to cast fire on the earth; and what will I but that it be kindled?* O cast this fire into my soul, that it may be kindled there!

Consider 3dly, that the coming of the Holy Ghost was not promised only to the Apostles, or to the first Christians; nor confined to the primitive ages: but was designed for a blessing, to be entailed on the people of God, throughout all ages. *I will ask the Father, and he shall give you another Paraclete* (or comforter) *that he may abide with you for ever, the Spirit of truth*, St. John xiv. 16, 17. He was promised to be for ever with the pastors of God's church, to *guide them into all truth* in teaching God's people; and to be for ever with the sheep of Christ, to *guide them into all truth*, in their belief and life; and to be the source of all grace to their souls. Wherefore, though we are not now to look for his visible coming down any more in tongues of fire; we are nevertheless entitled, if we sincerely seek and sue to him, to expect a share in his invisible

graces and communications; and to aspire to the honour and happiness of being made his temples. Christians, what a happiness indeed to have the Spirit of God in us! This we must all aim at, with our whole power: this is the great devotion of this holy time: this we must pray for at all times.

Conclude with this humble address of the church to the divine Spirit: *Come, Holy Ghost, fill the hearts of thy faithful; and kindle in them the fire of thy love:* or that other of the sacred hymn, *Come, O Spirit, our Creator, visit these souls of thine; and fill with thy heavenly grace the breasts which thou hast made for thyself.* Frequently repeat these or the like invitations: and trust in the infinite goodness of him, who delights to be with the children of men, that he will come to thee, and be thy guest.

Whitsun-Monday.

On the Happiness of having the Holy Ghost in the Soul.

CONSIDER first, how happy a guest the soul entertains, when she has in her the Holy Ghost, He is called in Scripture the *Paraclete* (a name that signifies both *comforter* and *solicitor*) from the *consolations* and graces he imparts to the soul, to sweeten all her crosses and labours, in her mortal pilgrimage, and to help her to overcome all difficulties and oppositions: and from his *soliciting* for her, by the spirit of prayer, which he inspires, teaching her to pray; and, as it were, praying with her, and in her. He is called by excellence, *the gift of the Most High*: as being the greatest gift that God can give: for what can he give greater than himself? *A gift*, comprising all other gifts. He is called *the living fountain*; or *the fountain of living water, springing up to everlasting life*, refreshing the inward man, assuaging the heart of concupiscence, extinguishing all thirst after the things of this world, and watering the soul with a never-failing stream of grace. He is called a *fire*, from the bright flames of love with

which he inflames the soul. And he is called the *unction* of the soul, from sweetly diffusing himself through all the soul, and giving strength and vigour to it. O what can be wanting to a soul, that entertains such a guest as this! Does she not, in some measure, anticipate the joys of heaven; having within her the King of heaven, and all his graces.

Consider 2dly, the happy fruits which the presence of the Holy Ghost produces in the soul, as they are reckoned up by St. Paul, *Gal.* v. 22, 23.

1. *Charity*, or the love of God, for his own infinite goodness sake; and the love of every neighbour in God, and for God; a fruit so remarkable in the first Christians, upon their receiving the Holy Ghost, that, through their love of God, they had all *but one heart, and one soul*, Acts iv. 32.
2. *Joy* from the testimony of a good conscience; and from the sense of the presence of this divine guest, and the experience of his sweetness.
3. *Peace* with God, with our neighbours, and with ourselves: a *peace* not granted to the wicked.
4. *Patience* in supporting crosses and adversities; which this heavenly spirit makes light and easy.
5. *Benignity*, or kindness, in relieving the distressed.
6. *Goodness*, or a willingness to impart all that is good to every neighbour.
7. *Longanimity*, or long-suffering, and perseverance, without being wearied out with labour, in overcoming evil with good.
8. *Mildness*, in restraining wrath, and bearing injuries.
9. *Faith*, or fidelity to all our engagements, both to God, and our neighbours.
10. *Modesty*, or moderation in all things, regulating every motion both of soul and body.
11. *Continency*, or temperance, in restraining all irregular inclinations; and,
12. *Chastity*, or purity, in keeping both soul and body from the defilements of lust.

O what happy fruits are these! O how happy is that soul in which the Spirit of God produces all these fruits! O, my soul, bring in this heavenly Spirit into thy inward house, and entertain him there, and all these fruits will be thine.

Consider 3dly, that, as nothing can be more happy, than to have the Holy Ghost in the soul; so nothing can be more miserable, than to be without this heavenly guest. Where the Spirit of God is not, there Satan is. Alas! can there be a greater misery than to be possessed by Satan. *If any man have not the Spirit of Christ*, says the Apostle, (*Rom viii. 9.*) *he is none of his.* If he be none of his, whose then must he be? Or what share can he have in Christ, or his kingdom? Oh! how true is that which the church sings at this time, in her address to this divine Spirit, *sine tuo numine, nihil est in homine, nihil est innoxium.* That, without his deity, there is nothing in man, there is nothing that is innocent. O! dread then, the misery of being without him: and flee from all those evils that may drive him away from thee.

Conclude to neglect nothing that is in thy power, by which thou mayest procure to thy soul the happiness of being the living temple of the living God; and of having the Holy Ghost there, not as a visiter only, but, as taking up his abode in thee, both for time and eternity.

Whitsun-Tuesday.

On the Gifts of the Holy Ghost.

CONSIDER first, what precious gifts the Spirit of God brings with him, wherever he comes; and what treasures he imparts to the soul, in which he takes up his abode. The prophet reckons up seven most admirable gifts of this holy Spirit, (*Isai. xi. 2, 3.*) when he styles him *the Spirit of wisdom, and of understanding, the Spirit of counsel, and of fortitude, the Spirit of knowledge, and of godliness, and . . . the Spirit of the fear of the Lord.* O how precious indeed, how admirable are these gifts! O how rich is that soul, which, by the coming of the Holy Ghost, is put in possession of these treasures! But what is this *wisdom* that the Holy Ghost imparts?

Not the *wisdom* of this world, which is downright folly, in the sight of God; because it looks no farther than earthly toys, and contriving for the transitory enjoyments of this world; whilst it forgets God and eternity. Not the *wisdom* of the philosophers; who busy themselves in studying the courses of the stars, and the secrets of nature; and neglect to seek truth in its fountain: because they do not seriously apply themselves to know God, and their own interior. But that *wisdom*, which alone deserves this glorious name, which consists in the knowledge and love of God: which tends continually to him: and which seeks and finds him in all things.

Consider 2dly, how precious also are those other gifts, which the Spirit of God communicates to the soul. The gift of *understanding*, which opens the eyes of the soul to the light of God; and sets the truths of God in their proper light: which clearly discovers to the soul the shortness and vanity of all temporal honours, riches, and pleasures; and convinceth her that nothing is truly great, or worthy of her affection, but that which is eternal. By the help of this light, the end of our creation, the dignity of an immortal soul, the nature of our mortal pilgrimage, the four last things, and other Christian truths, sink deep into the soul, and have a wonderful influence upon the whole conduct of our lives. But then, as we are strangers and travellers here below, and are obliged to make the best of our way towards our true country, through the midst of difficulties and dangers, and with infinite opposition from strong and subtle enemies; the Spirit of God comes into our assistance, with two other admirable gifts: *viz.* the gift of *counsel*, to shew us our way; to discover to us the snares and artifices of our enemies; and to guide us safe through all dangers: and the gift of *fortitude*, or heavenly courage, and strength, to animate us to encounter all opposition, from the world, the flesh, and the devil; and to help us to come off

with victory in all our conflicts. O how happy is that traveller who has such a guide, such a counsellor, such a powerful helper and protector!

Consider 3dly, the rest of the gifts which the Holy Ghost imparts to that soul in which he dwells: *viz.* the gift of *knowledge*, to instruct her in every virtue, and every duty, and in every step she is to take in order to God and a happy eternity. Then the gift of *godliness* or *piety*; which makes the soul quite in earnest, and perfectly fervent, in the service of God; so that she runs on with vigour, and alacrity, in the ways of all his divine commandments. And lastly the gift of *the fear of the Lord*, which the Scripture calls *the beginning of wisdom*; which restrains the soul from all that may offend God, and makes her fear his displeasure more than any other evil whatsoever. Can any treasures upon earth be comparable to these?

Conclude to set a high value upon these heavenly gifts, the least of which is worth more than all the world can give. How rich then is that soul which enjoys them all, by enjoying the Spirit of God, who is the source of all good, and who alone can impart such excellent gifts.

Whitsun-Wednesday.

On the Means of keeping the Holy Ghost in the Soul.

CONSIDER first, that the soul which has been favoured with a visit from the Holy Ghost, if she desires a continuance of that happiness, must take care to entertain him, in a proper manner. For if she takes little or no notice of this heavenly guest; if she quickly turns her back upon him, to attend to every idle and impertinent amusement that offers itself; if she do not frequently go in, to wait upon him, in her inward house; if she love not to converse with him there: she will quickly lose him; she will drive him away from her. He delights to be with them that delight to be with him. He expects a cor-

respondence and return of love : and therefore with-
draws himself from such souls as take no care to en-
tertain him, by recollection and love ; but choose to
give themselves up to dissipation of thought, and to
squander away that precious time, which they
should spend in his company, in following empty
phantoms, and roving imaginations. O, my soul, is
not this too often thy case ? Amongst the many
thoughts, which successively occupy thy mind, all
the day long, how few are there that are any thing
to the purpose ; how few that are fit to come in, to
appear in the presence of the Holy Ghost ? How
then canst thou expect he will stay with thee, if thou
introducest such company as this into his lodging ?

Consider 2dly, that as the Spirit of God will not
dwell in a soul that does not attend on him by *recol-
lection of thought* ; so neither will he dwell in a soul
that does not serve him with *purity of heart and af-
fection*. He will be sole partner of the heart in which
he resides : he will allow of no partner there. He is
a jealous lover, that will bear no rival. A heart di-
vided in its affections, between the Creator and the
creature, excludes the Holy Ghost : he will suffer
no division ; he claims the whole heart : the bed is
too narrow to hold two : he will have all or none.
Christians, if then you pretend to the happiness of
being temples of the Holy Ghost, you must not ad-
mit of any idols in your souls. Now all disorderly
affections are idols, inasmuch as, by them, you pre-
fer the creature before the Creator : and all such af-
fections are disorderly, as captivate your hearts, and
take them off from God. Let the object of your
love be ever so innocent in itself, it is no longer in-
nocent when it is loved without a due subordination
to the love of God. It becomes then impure : it de-
files the heart : it chases away the Spirit of God ;
who will not dwell but in a clean heart.

Consider 3dly, that, in order to keep the Holy
Ghost in the soul, so that he may choose to dwell
there, as in his temple ; we must not only keep this-

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 temple clean and undefiled : for if any man violate the temple of God, him will God destroy, (1 Cor. iii. 17.) but we must also take care, that it be made a house of prayer ; as the house of God should be. We must frequently go into this temple ; there to worship this Spirit of truth, in spirit and truth. We must apply and employ all the three powers of the soul, the will, the memory, and the understanding, in frequently attending there upon their God, in the way of mental prayer. In a word, the worship of God should be ever going forward in this temple of his. This is the true way to engage him to stay with us, and to make our souls the place of his rest for ever and ever.

Conclude to make use of all these means to entertain this sovereign guest, and to fix him in your souls. Give him full possession of your memory and understanding, by recollection of thought, and attention to his presence ; and make him the absolute master of your will, by simplicity of intention, and purity of heart and affection ; and he will be yours for ever.

Whitsun-Thursday.

On the Marks of the Holy Ghost's abiding in the Soul.

CONSIDER first, that the surest way to make a judgment, whether the Holy Ghost abides in the soul, or no ; is by his fruits. The Spirit of God never lies idle : he is a fire that is always active ; always in motion ; always tending upwards. If we find nothing of this in our soul, we have reason to fear he is not there. His fruits are *charity, joy, peace, patience, &c.* If we have none of these fruits, he is not with us. My soul, what is thy faith ? Is it firm ? Is it lively ? Or is it not rather dull and dead ? Does it shew itself in the practice of thy life ? Dost thou live by faith ? What is thy hope ? What is thy sense of the things of eternity ? What is thy esteem of spiritual things ? What is thy devotion ? What is thy love for God, and thy neighbour ? What is thy

desire of making a daily progress in the way of God? By examining thyself upon these heads, it will be easy to judge whether the Holy Ghost be with thee or no. But especially, there is no surer mark of this divine Spirit abiding in the soul, than a constant and fervent desire of loving God daily more and more; and of ever knowing and doing his holy will in all things. Dost thou find in thyself this earnest desire of loving and pleasing God? If so, the Spirit of God cannot be far from thee.

Consider 2dly, that as there is an infinite opposition between the Spirit of God and wilful sin; so one of the surest marks of the Holy Ghost's residing in the soul, is a settled constant abhorrence of wilful sin: with a fixed determination of the soul never to admit, for the future, any such sin, upon any consideration whatsoever. My soul, what is thy disposition in this regard? Art thou fully determined to be ever faithful and loyal to thy God, both in life and death? Dost thou resolutely renounce Satan and all his works, both for the present time, and for ever? Is it thy constant and settled resolution, never to transgress the holy law and commandments of God, for any worldly honour, interest, or pleasure; for any respect of person; for any fear or love; for any thing that the world can give, or take away; or for any other consideration? If this be thy sincere disposition and determination, the Holy Ghost is with thee: but if thou art not thus determined, there is no room for him in thy soul, because Satan is there.

Consider 3dly, that where the Holy Ghost comes, *he convinces the world of sin, and of justice, and of judgment*, John xvi. 8. He convinces the soul of sin, inasmuch as he gives to the soul, which he enlightens with his presence, a sense of the enormity of sin, and of the multitude and greatness of her own sins in particular; a horror for that hellish monster; and a desire of abolishing it by penance. He discovers also many stains, where the soul before perceived none; and humbles her exceedingly, by the

conviction of her manifold guilt. My soul, dost thou experience in thyself this *conviction of sin*? The Holy Ghost by his coming *convince*s also the soul of the *justice of Christ*, and of his heavenly law; of the beauty of virtue and holiness; and of the pleasure and happiness that is found in serving God in earnest. Art thou, my soul, practically *convinced* of all this? Dost thou practically prefer this manna of heaven before the flesh-pots of Egypt? Again, the Holy Ghost, by his coming, *convince*s the soul of the *wrong judgment* she has hitherto made, in following the world, and the *prince of this world, who is already judged*, and condemned; and of the *right judgment* she ought to make of all things; in order to escape that *judgment*, which God will otherwise one day make of her. Dost thou, my soul, find in thee this *conviction of judgment*? Is thy *judgment* rectified by the Holy Ghost, in regard to truth and falsehood, verity and vanity, time and eternity? Dost thou not still follow, by a *perverse judgment* the prince of this world, rather than Jesus Christ: the maxims of worldlings, who are liars in their balances: rather than the practice of the Saints, who weigh all things in the scales of the sanctuary? Will thy way of judging be able to stand the test of the last great trial?

Conclude to examine well, by such marks as these, whether the Spirit of God be with thee, or no. If thou seem to find in thyself these marks of his presence, return him humble thanks: but be not too secure, lest the amices of thy self-love should deceive thee; or thy pride should drive him away from thee. But if thou discoverest not in thyself these marks of his being with thee, bewail thy misery; and give thyself no rest, till by penitential tears, and fervent prayer, and all the other means, by which the Holy Ghost is to be invited into the soul, thou hast grounds to hope that he is returned to thee.

*Whitsun-Friday.**On the Sacrament of Confirmation.*

CONSIDER first, that confirmation is a sacrament; by which the faithful, if duly disposed, receive the Holy Ghost, together with all his gifts and graces; in order to make them strong and perfect Christians. The Apostles were *confirmed* in a wonderful manner, by the Holy Ghost's coming down visibly upon them on Whitsunday: but the rest of the faithful were to be confirmed by their ministry, and by that of their successors, the bishops of God's church; receiving the Holy Ghost by the imposition of their hands, and prayer, *Acts* viii. 15, 17, 18, and chap. xix. 6. Give thanks to our Lord for this sacred institution, by means of which he perpetuates in his church the mission of his Holy Spirit, and the communication of his graces. What a dignity, what a happiness, to receive the Holy Ghost, the Lord of heaven and earth, and the inexhaustible source of all grace! Wheresoever he comes, he brings with him all his treasures; and he is infinitely liberal in imparting them. How much then are they their own enemies, who either neglect this great means of receiving the Holy Ghost; or else come to it without due dispositions; and so lose the benefit of it; and even pervert it to their own damnation:

Consider 2dly, that the proper and peculiar grace of the sacrament of confirmation, is a heavenly *fortitude*; that is to say, a spiritual strength, valour, and courage, in order to maintain the cause of God and our souls, against the visible and invisible enemies of our faith. By this sacrament we are made soldiers of Christ. Here we give in our names to be listed in the service of this great king: we put ourselves under his banner: we receive the sacred mark of his cross on our foreheads; his cross which is the royal standard of all his troops: here we engage ourselves to fight his battles, against the world, the flesh, and

the devil; and we are equipped out with proper arms for this warfare. O how glorious is this title of a soldier of Christ! How happy this service! What have we to apprehend, following Christ for our captain: and having his holy Spirit with us, to guide, strengthen, encourage, and defend us? But, O the noble pay which this great king gives to his soldiers! For he gives them nothing less than himself, and that for eternity. *Be thou faithful unto death, saith he, and I will give thee the crown of life,* Apocal. ii. 10.

Consider 3dly, that, in the sacrament of confirmation, the soul is, in a particular manner, dedicated and consecrated to God, by the unction of his holy Spirit; at the same time as the forehead is anointed with the Holy Chrism. This Chrism is a compound of oil, and balm or balsam, solemnly consecrated by the bishops of God's church, on Maundy Thursday; kept in the church with the utmost reverence; and only used in the consecration of such things as are more solemnly dedicated to God, or more nearly deputed to his divine service; so that the using of this holy oil in confirmation, is to give us to understand, that, by this sacrament, we also are solemnly dedicated, sanctified, and consecrated to God; to be the temples of his Spirit. Inasmuch as this visible unction, and consecration of the body, is the outward sign of the invisible unction, and consecration of the soul, by the Spirit of God: as all the sacraments are outward signs of inward grace. Christians, what are your thoughts of this consecration, which your souls have received? Have you hitherto considered yourselves as a people particularly dedicated to God, and sanctified by the unction of his spirit? Have you reflected that you have been sanctified with the like consecration to that with which the altars, and temples of God, are solemnly dedicated to his service? Remember this, at least for the future; and let your lives shew forth, that you are indeed the living temples of the living God.

Conclude to set a high value upon the grace of your confirmation; and to live up to the glorious character you there received. See you behave, in every respect, as becomes strong and perfect Christians, and soldiers of Christ. Beware of receiving so great a grace in vain.

*Whitsun-Saturday.**On the Obligations of our Confirmation.*

CONSIDER first, that confirmation is one of those three sacraments, which imprint a character, or spiritual mark in the soul. The nature of this character of confirmation is such, as to carry with it a certain dedication of the soul to the service of God, in the quality of his soldier: as the character of baptism marks us out for the people of God; and the character of Holy Orders for the ministers of God. Hence it is, that these three sacraments, after they have been once received, cannot be received any more; because the character which they leave in the soul, which is the mark of the consecration of the soul to God, can never be lost, and therefore can never be repeated. But then these three sacraments carry also with them a strict obligation of living up to this character, and to this consecration, which they impart to the soul: and thus this sacrament of confirmation in particular, obliges us to observe the whole discipline of the soldiers of Jesus Christ; to stand to our colours; to fight manfully the battles of our Lord; and rather to die than change sides, or to go over to the enemy, by any wilful sin. This is the allegiance we owe to Christ, in quality of his soldiers: this we oblige ourselves to when we receive the character of confirmation.

Consider *adly*, that the soldiers of this world profess a strict regard to all the laws of their calling, and to the orders of their officers. They expose themselves to all kind of labours and dangers, in marches, in sieges, and in battles. They endure heats and colds, and all the inclemency of the weather, and

the seasons ; they suffer hunger and thirst, watchings, and all other hardships, to which their station of life exposes them : and all this for a trifling consideration of small pay. What lessons are here for Christians, who, by the sacrament of confirmation, have enlisted themselves soldiers of Christ ? How much more ought they to embrace with courage, all the labours and sufferings to which their spiritual warfare exposes them ? Especially as they fight under the banner of so great a king ; in his presence and company ; and for so great a reward. But alas the soldiers of this world will, I fear, one day rise up in judgment, and condemn us, for having done and suffered so little in the warfare of Christ, in comparison with what they have done and suffered in the warfare of the world !

Consider 3dly, that whatsoever is once dedicated and consecrated to God, ought to continue for ever dedicated and consecrated to his divine service. And it is no less a crime than sacrilege, to pervert any thing, dedicated to him, to profane uses. Therefore, the soul which, by the sacrament of confirmation, has been dedicated, sanctified, and consecrated to God ; and which always carries about with her the mark of this consecration, is strictly obliged thereby to be ever his ; to be ever faithful, and to be ever holy ; as a thing dedicated to his divine service, both in quality of his soldier, and of his temple. O remember, Christians, that the character which the soul receives in this sacrament, can never be effaced, neither in this world, nor in the world to come : that, if we live up to the obligations of it, it will shine most brightly in our souls to eternity, and be no small addition to our everlasting glory and happiness : but if we should defile and profane this sacred mark of Christ, by a sinful life ; and after these solemn engagements, and the consecration of our souls to him, should become rebels and deserters ; that this same mark would appear in judgment against us ; it would condemn us at the bar of divine justice ; it

would continue with us for ever, as a mark of disgrace ; a perpetual reproach among the damned ; and an additional torture and gripe to the soul, for having once been dedicated to God, and having been so mad, so wretched, so wicked, as to apostatize from him.

Conclude to bear always in mind the sacred character of thy confirmation, as well as that of thy baptism ; that thou mayest live up to the obligations of them both. Be not terrified at the prospect of the conflicts thou must sustain, or the crosses and hardships thou wilt have to go through in this warfare : the grace of God, and his *peace, which surpasseth all understanding*, (Phil. iv. 7.) will support thee, and *never suffer thee to be tempted above thy strength*, (1 Cor. x. 13.) but bring thee off with comfort and victory. In token of which, the bishop, when he confirmed thee, gave thee a blow on the cheek, as a declaration of the adversities thou wast to sustain ; but at the same time gave thee *God's peace*, that thou mightest understand that God would be with thee in them all, and never leave thee.

*Trinity Sunday.**On the Blessed Trinity.*

CONSIDER first, that, on this day, the church sets before the eyes of our souls, this principal mystery of the Christian faith ; by which we believe one eternal God, in three several persons : which we call the mystery of the blessed Trinity, or of three in one ; three persons in one God. This is the great object of the Christian's worship. This we ought to adore every day and every hour. Every Sunday in the year might be called Trinity Sunday, because every Sunday is set aside for the worship of this adorable Trinity, our Lord and our God. Yes, all our time belongs to him : and the great sacrifice, that is offered daily on millions of altars throughout the world, is principally designed to give sovereign adoration, homage, praise, and glory, to the most

Holy Trinity. But then this day is more particularly appointed by the church (which has now just finished the celebrating the other great festivals, relating to the mysteries of our redemption and sanctification, wrought by the three Divine Persons) in order to honour, in a more particular manner, this chiefest mystery of our religion. Come, then, my soul, and come all ye Christian souls with me, this day, and let us bow down all our powers to adore this incomprehensible mystery. The more it is above our reach, the more worthy it is, both of our faith and veneration.

Consider 2dly, more in particular, what our faith teaches us, with relation to this mystery. We believe there is but one true and living God, and no more ; eternal, incomprehensible, omnipotent, and infinite in all his attributes and perfections. In this one God we believe three distinct persons, of the same substance and essence, and perfectly equal in age, in power, in wisdom, and in all perfections : the Father, who has no beginning, and proceeds from no one : the Son, who proceeds from the Father, by an eternal and ineffable generation ; as his living Word and wisdom, the brightness of his glory, and the most perfect image of his person : and the Holy Ghost, the Spirit of God, who proceeds eternally from the Father and the Son. We believe that these three are one, by having all three the same Godhead, that is, the same divine nature. The Father is God, the Son is God, the Holy Ghost is God : and yet they are not three Gods, but one God, one Lord, one Almighty, in three several persons. This is the true Christian Catholic belief of the mystery of the blessed Trinity, essentially necessary for our eternal salvation. Let us then make frequent acts of faith, concerning this sovereign truth : let us cast down every proud thought that offers to rebel against it : God himself has taught it, who neither can deceive nor be deceived.

Consider 3dly, that it is not our faith alone, but

our lives also, that must render proper homage to this adorable mystery of the eternal Trinity. *What will it avail thee to discourse profoundly of the Trinity, saith a servant of God, if, through want of humility, thou be disagreeable to the Trinity?* Humility of mind and heart is the most agreeable homage that man can pay to this infinite Majesty. *Heaven is my throne, saith he, (Isai. lxvi. 1, 2.) and the earth my footstool—My hand made all these things—but to whom shall I have respect, but to him that is poor and little, and of a contrite spirit, and that trembleth at my words?* Learn also, from the Epistle of this day, as a part of the homage thou owest to the most sacred Trinity, to adore in silence the depth of the secret counsels and judgments of God, and the wisdom of his unsearchable ways : and, in all events, to give glory to him. *For of him, and by him, and in him, are all things : to him be glory for ever : Amen.* Rom. xi. 36.

Conclude to come daily before the throne of the eternal Trinity, with thy best homage of faith, love, and humility. Adore the almighty power of the Father, the infinite wisdom of the Son, and the incomprehensible goodness and love of the Holy Ghost : and give up the three powers of thy soul, and thy whole being, without reserve, to be ruled and disposed of, for time and eternity, by this infinite power, wisdom, and goodness.

Monday after Trinity Sunday.

On the Figures of the Blessed Eucharist. And first of the Paschal Lamb.

CONSIDER first, that the Old Testament was a figure of the New : and that all the most remarkable events, that are there recorded by the Spirit of God, have relation, in the way of prophetic figures, to Christ, and his Church of the New Testament. Thus the redemption or deliverance of the children of Israel out of the slavery in Egypt, was a figure of the redemption of man by Christ, from

the bondage of Satan and sin : and the means that were then ordered and appointed to be used, as a preparation for that deliverance, were a figure of what was to be afterwards done by our Redeemer, for the deliverance of all mankind from a far worse slavery. Now it was appointed, (*Exod. xii.*) that the children of Israel, the night before their going out of Egypt, should, in all their families, offer up an unspotted lamb in sacrifice ; and that they should sprinkle their door-posts with the blood of the victim, as a sign for the destroying angel, who slew that night all the first-born of Egypt, to pass over their houses ; and that they should eat the flesh of the lamb that same night, roasted at the fire, with unleavened bread, and wild lettuce ; having their loins girt, their shoes on their feet, and their staves in their hands, in readiness to take the journey, which they were immediately to begin, in consequence of the deliverance of that night. See here, my soul, this illustrious figure : but now let us come to the application of it.

Consider therefore, 2dly, that this unspotted lamb, first offered in sacrifice, and then eaten in a sacred and mysterious sign, or sacrament, was a lively figure of Jesus Christ, the true Lamb of God, offered up in sacrifice for our redemption from sin and hell ; with the sprinkling of whose blood our souls are rescued from the power of Satan and from the second death : and whose sacred flesh we are commanded to eat in the divine mysteries, as an earnest of the share we have in him and his sacrifice ; as a sovereign means of communicating to our souls the fruit of our redemption, and all the grace purchased by our Redeemer ; as a pledge of our eternal happiness, and as a preparation, and a viaticum, for the great journey we are to make out of this Egypt of the world, to the true land of promise, the land of the living. O my soul, let us adore, praise, and give thanks to our Lord, for these wonders he has wrought in our favour, in these heavenly mysteries. Let us

embrace, with all affection, this Lamb of God, immolated for our sins: this Christian pasch; this victim of our redemption; this new sacrifice of the new covenant, the covenant of life and love: let us frequently approach to these mysteries; but see it be with due dispositions.

Consider 3dly, that the paschal lamb was to be eaten with unleavened bread and wild lettuce, to signify the dispositions of soul with which we ought to come to the Christian passover. Christ is now our paschal lamb. *Therefore, says the apostle, (1 Cor. v. 8.) let us feast, not with the old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.* So that a purity of intention, uprightness, and simplicity of heart, and the sincere disposition of a soul which desires to give herself up, without reserve, to her Redeemer, are signified by the unleavened bread, with which the pasch was to be eaten: as the wholesome bitterness of a true repentance and contrition for our sins, is signified by the bitter taste of the wild lettuce. And whereas it was also ordered, that in eating the paschal lamb, they should have their loins girt up, their shoes on their feet, and their staves in their hands: we are to learn from these ceremonies, that, if we would worthily approach to the Lamb of God in the sacred mysteries, we must gird up the loins of our soul, by a resolute restraint of our passions and lusts; and have our feet, that is, the affections of the soul, *shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace, (Eph. iv. 15.)* that is, with a readiness of heart to follow, in all things, the rules of the gospel, as the only way to true peace: and hold our staves in our hands, as pilgrims and travellers, not having any property or lasting dwelling here, but wholly bent on making the best of our way to our true country.

Conclude to frequent, henceforward, the great Christian passover of the most blessed Eucharist with the disposition of true Israelites, leaving Egypt, and marching towards the land of promise. Ever consi-

der it as the sacrifice and sacrament of your deliverance and redemption, and approach to it with the devotion which this consideration requires: as the Israelites were commanded to solemnize, by the annual devotion of the sacrifice and sacrament of the paschal lamb, the memory of their redemption from their Egyptian bondage.

Tuesday after Trinity Sunday.

Of the Manna, and the Bread of Elias.

CONSIDER first, that the manna, with which God fed the children of Israel for forty years in the wilderness, from their going out of Egypt, till their entering into the land of promise, was another prophetic emblem of the true bread of heaven, which we receive in the blessed Eucharist. *He commanded the clouds from above, and opened the doors of heaven, says the Psalmist, lxxvii. 23, 24, 25. And he rained down manna upon them to eat; and gave them the bread of heaven: man did eat the bread of angels.* And yet this miraculous food, formed by angels, and sent down from the clouds, and therefore called the bread of heaven, and the bread of angels, was but a figure of that bread of life, which we receive in the blessed sacrament: an illustrious figure indeed, but nothing in comparison with the truth. *Moses did not give you bread from heaven, says our Lord to the Jews, John vi. (for the manna only came down from the clouds) but my Father giveth you the true bread from heaven.——I am the living bread which came down from heaven. If any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever; and the bread that I will give is my flesh for the life of the world.——As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father: so he that eateth me, the same shall also live by me. This is the bread that came down from heaven, not as your Fathers did eat manna, and are dead. He that eateth this bread shall live for ever, ver. 32, 51, 52, 58, 59. O my soul, see thou embrace this living and life-giving bread.*

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Consider 2dly, that the manna was the food upon which the people of God lived, for forty years, in the wilderness; but which ceased, as soon as they came to eat of the fruits of the land of promise: to give us to understand, that the bread of heaven, which we here receive, veiled under the sacramental species, in the blessed Eucharist, is to be the food, nourishment, strength, and life of our souls, during our mortal pilgrimage through the wilderness of this world, till we come to the true land of promise, and there eat of the happy fruits of that blessed land of the living, by the beatific vision and contemplation of the Divinity; and that then all sacramental veils shall be removed, and we shall see, and feed, upon life and truth itself, face to face, for all eternity. Christians, if you hope to arrive one day at this happy land of promise, see you neglect not to gather, for your journey, the manna of heaven, by the frequent and worthy approaching to the bread of life, in the most holy sacrament: without this support you will perish in the wilderness, and may never reach your journey's end. But, if you would truly relish this heavenly manna, you must take care not to let your palate be depraved, like the carnal Jews, by an affection to the onions and flesh-pots of Egypt.

Consider 3dly, another figure of this heavenly food, in that *hearth-cake* of the prophet Elias, with which he was fed by an angel in the wilderness, when he was fleeing from the persecution of Jezabel, 1 Kings xix. *In the strength of which food he walked forty days and forty nights, unto the Mount of God Horeb*, v. 8. Where he was favoured with a vision of the Deity, as far as man is capable of seeing him in this life. *Arise, eat*, said the angel to him, (v. 7.) *for thou hast yet a great way to go*. All which expresses to us, that retiring from the dangers and the contagion of a wicked world, as from the impious Jezabel, in order to make our journey to the mountain of God, the mountain of eternity, we must have recourse to this bread of heaven for our support.

In our way ; for we have yet a great way to go, being far off from that perfection which is required before we can come to the vision of God ; and this barren wilderness, through which we are to travel, affording us no proper food for our sustenance in the way, but what we must have from heaven.

Conclude, my soul, if thou aspirest after this mountain of God, and the happy vision of him, diligently to procure this bread of life, in the strength of which thou mayest also walk, during the forty days of thy pilgrimage to that blessed mountain. But remember, that this bread was only given in the wilderness, that is, in retirement and solitude : and that the manna was not given till the people had left Egypt : and learn from thence, that a spirit of recollection, and a purifying of the heart from the affections to the Egypt of this world, are the best dispositions for the bread of heaven.

Wednesday after Trinity Sunday.

Of other Figures of the blessed Eucharist.

CONSIDER first, that the sacrifice of Melchisedech, (*Gen. xiv. 18.*) in bread and wine, was another figure of the sacrifice and sacrament of the body and blood of Christ in the Eucharist ; as Melchisedech himself, and his priesthood, was an illustrious figure of Christ, and his eternal priesthood, as we learn from *Psal. cx. 4.* and *Heb. vii.* And so likewise, in the law of Moses, all those sacrifices, commonly called *peace offerings*, in which both the priest and the people were partakers of the victim, were also figures of Christ sacrificed for us, and received by us. So many ways was the Divine Majesty pleased, both before the law, and in the law, to shew forth to us, not only the sacrifice, in which his Son should be both our priest and victim ; but also the sacrament, by which he should communicate his own flesh to us. Learn from hence, my soul, what reverence, what devotion thou owest to our tremendous mysteries ; the very figures of which were so

sacred and so venerable. It was a great crime, if any one that was not clean and pure, presumed to approach to these ancient sacrifices; what purity then is the Christian obliged to bring with him, when he approaches to the truth, of which these were but shadows?

Consider 2dly, that God appointed twelve loaves, made of fine flour, to stand always in his temple, before the veil of the *sancta sanctorum*, or the inward sanctuary, placed there upon a table, made for that purpose, of incorruptible wood, and overlaid with gold: and that the clearest frankincense should be put upon them; that *the bread might be for a memorial of the oblation of the Lord, by an everlasting covenant*, Levit. xxiv. 5, 6, 7, 8. These loaves, called the *holy bread*, and the *loaves of proposition*, or shew-bread, were also a figure of the holy Eucharist. They always stood before the Lord in his temple, as an offering made to him by his people; as a figure of that solemn offering which should be afterwards daily made, under the form of bread in the church of Christ: the clearest frankincense was put upon them, to denote the pure prayer, and devotion, with which this offering was to be made: and they stood before the veil, with the golden candlestick, and the altar of perfumes; to signify that the sovereign means to bring our souls to God, and to introduce us within the veil, into his eternal sanctuary, would be the right use of the bread of life, which we have in the blessed Eucharist; joined with devout prayer; and the lights and graces of the Spirit of God, signified by the seven branches of the golden candlestick.

Consider 3dly, that *the tree of life*, planted in the midst of the earthly Paradise, (Gen. ii. 9.) was also a figure of the blessed sacrament. The fruit of this tree had that excellent property, that if sin had not banished us from that happy abode, we should have been maintained thereby in a constant vigour, strength and health; and so should have never died.

O how well does the blessed Eucharist answer this noble figure! Seeing we here feed upon life itself, in its very source: and by frequently and worthily approaching to it, receive a plentiful supply of heavenly grace, for the maintaining of the vigour, strength, and health of the soul; that so we may never incur the second death; but may pass from life to life; from the life of grace to the life of glory; from life concealed under sacrament veils, to life seen and enjoyed, without shadow or change, to all eternity.

Conclude, from all these ancient types and figures, so noble, and so expressive of the blessed Eucharist, and its fruits, to raise thy thoughts and heart above this earth, and all that is earthly, in the use of this heavenly sacrament. And assure thyself, that this divine mystery, so many ways prefigured, both in the law of nature, and in the law of Moses, must needs be something far superior to all types and figures.

Corpus-Christi Day.

On the Institution of the blessed Eucharist.

CONSIDER first, how our Lord, having finished the course of his mortal life, when *his hour was now come that he should pass out of this world to the Father: having loved his own who were in the world,* says the beloved disciple, (*John xiii. 1.*) *he loved them unto the end:* and gave them, in the last stage of his life, the most evident tokens of his boundless love: as well in what he endured, out of pure love for us, in his passion and death; as in the institution of the eucharistic sacrifice and sacrament, at his last supper, as an admirable legacy of love: in which, and by which, he might not only *be always with us, to the end of the world;* but might also unite himself to us, in such a manner, as that *we should abide in him, and he in us,* John vi. 57. O how wonderful are the ways of his divine love! How incomprehensible the riches of his bounty and goodness to us!

What could he give us more, than when he gives us himself? What could he do more to testify his affection for us? Is it possible, my soul, we should ever forget, or be ungrateful, to such a lover?

Consider 2dly, the infinite treasures which our Lord has bequeathed to us, in the institution of these divine mysteries: which contain an inexhaustible source of divine grace; the living bread, the food, the nourishment, the strength, and the life of our souls; the manna of heaven; the tree of life; spirit, truth, and life itself: the remedy of all our evils; the most powerful medicine for all our diseases; the sovereign antidote against the poison of the infernal serpent; the comfort of our banishment; the support of our pilgrimage; the price of our ransom; the earnest of our eternal salvation; the great sacrifice and victim of the New Testament: by means of which we are enabled to give worthy praise, adoration, and homage, to God; to return him acceptable thanks; and to apply daily to our souls, all the fruit of the death and passion of the Son of God; as well for the remission of all our sins, as for the obtaining of all good through him, both for time and eternity. In a word, he has bequeathed to us, in these heavenly mysteries, his own sacred body and blood, together with his soul and divinity; so rich a present, that heaven can give nothing greater.

Consider 3dly, what could be the motive that induced our Lord to communicate himself, and all his treasures, to us, in this wonderful manner, by the blessed Eucharist! O, my soul, it was no other but his own pure goodness and love. It was that, by this means, he might be always with us; *for his delight is to be with the children of men*, Prov. viii. 31. It was that he might unite us to himself, that he might abide in us, and we in him. O who ever heard of such love as this! But what didst thou see in me, dearest Lord, that could claim thy love, and such a love? In me a poor worm of the earth; and what is infinitely worse, a most ungrateful, wicked

sinner ; a traitor to thee, and to thy Father, and who has so often crucified thee by my repeated crimes ? O, ye heavens, be astonished at this prodigy of my Saviour's bounty and love for me ; and of my wickedness and ingratitude, in not making him a better return ! O, my soul, let us begin now at least to be wholly his : let nothing henceforward be capable of separating us any more from this divine lover.

Conclude to be ever thankful for this unspeakable benefit of the institution of the blessed sacrament, and sacrifice of the altar. Join now with the church in celebrating this octave, with an extraordinary devotion, in acknowledgment of thy Saviour's goodness and love, which he has shewn to us in these mysteries : and make the best amends thou art able, by thy diligence in this devotion, for the many affronts, abuses, and sacrileges, to which thy Saviour has here exposed himself, for the love of thee.

Friday within the Octave of Corpus-Christi.

On the Mysteries contained in the blessed Eucharist.

CONSIDER first, that all the sacraments are sacred and mysterious signs of divine graces, and of heavenly truths, which lie concealed under these outward appearances, and, through them, are conveyed to our souls. But that the blessed Eucharist in particular, as it is the greatest of all the sacraments, contains more, and greater mysteries, than any of the rest. Here our Lord gives himself to us in quality of our *food* : that, as sin, and death, and all our miseries, came to us originally by *eating* of the forbidden fruit ; so grace and life, and all our good, should come to us, by *eating* here of the fruit of the *tree of life*, which he has commanded us to eat. And he gives himself to us, under the form of *bread*, as being a form the most expressive to us, both of his *real*, and his *mystical body*. *He is the living bread which came down from heaven, for the life of the world*, John vi. 51, 52. And his body has all the qualities of *bread* in regard to our souls ; in-

asmuch as it is the true food and nourishment of our souls unto life everlasting. Therefore this form of bread is the most proper to express to us the true *living bread*, which it contains; namely, the true and *real body* of Christ; and its qualities and effects, in being the food, nourishment, strength, and life of our souls: and, at the same time, is also most proper to express to us the mystical body of Christ, which is his church; and the union of concord and charity, by which all its members, like so many grains of corn, are closely united, as it were, in one bread, by means of the holy communion, according to that of St. Paul, (1 Cor. x. 17.) *We being many, are one bread, one body, all that partake of one bread.*

Consider 2dly, that, in this most holy sacrament and sacrifice, the death and passion of the Son of God is also, in a lively manner, represented to us, and all the mysteries of our redemption, are solemnly celebrated; inasmuch as, by the separate consecration of the bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ, the true Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world, presents himself to his Father, upon our altars, under the figure of death, that is, under the sacramental veils, which represent his body as delivered up, broken, and slain for us, and his blood as shed for us. So that here the whole passion and death of Christ is solemnly acted, as a most sacred tragedy, by himself in person: here that death, which is the fountain of all our good, is shewed forth in such manner, as not only to be kept up in our remembrance, but also to live in us, and bring forth always in us the fruit of life: here the blood of Christ most powerfully pleads and intercedes for us. Here, in fine, not only the passion and death, but also the victorious resurrection, and triumphant ascension of our crucified king, are solemnly commemorated. O, my soul, admire and adore these divine mysteries!

Consider 3dly, that the participation of the body

and blood of Christ, under the sacramental veils, is no less mysterious in the many benefits it ensures to us, with relation to our redemption and salvation. For here we receive an assurance of the share we have in our Redeemer, and in the sacrifice of his cross. Here we are mystically incorporated in him, and are made partakers of his Spirit. Here we are admitted to that blood, which is the seal of the new covenant; importing the remission of our sins, and our reconciliation with God, through the death of his Son; together with an admittance to all graces and blessings through him. Here, in fine, we have a most certain pledge of a happy resurrection and everlasting life, and of an eternal enjoyment, in our blessed country, of him who thus lovingly gives himself to us, in this place of banishment.

Conclude ever to approach, with all reverence and love, to these mysteries so full of majesty and love. The high-priest, in the Old Testament, was but once a year to enter into the inward sanctuary, called the *holy of holies*, and then not without diverse purifications and sacrifices, and a solemn fast of all Israel. See then, how pure, how holy, thou oughtest to be, who art so often admitted, by the means of this heavenly sacrament, into the sanctuary of the New Testament, that is, to these divine mysteries, sanctified by the presence of Jesus Christ himself, the true *Holy of holies*, of which that Jewish sanctuary was but a shadow.

Saturday within the Octave of Corpus-Christi.

Of the real Presence of Jesus Christ in the blessed Eucharist.

CONSIDER first, that what, above all things, renders these divine mysteries venerable to a Christian, and that which principally calls for his faith and devotion, is the real presence of Jesus Christ, true God, and true man, and of all that he contains, both as God, and as man, in the blessed Eucharist. This *real presence* we learn from the ex-

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press words of truth itself, so often repeated in the Holy Scripture; and from the express declaration of the church of God, against which the gates of hell can never prevail. Upon these two pillars of truth, the word of God, and the church of God, the humble and faithful Christian securely rests. Bow thyself down then, my soul, to adore this sacred truth. Let no proud thought of opposition arise in thee against this great mystery. Captivate thy understanding to the obedience of faith. Remember that the glory and merit of faith is to believe what thou canst not see: that the Almighty can do infinitely more than thou canst comprehend: and that no effort of mercy, bounty, and love, can be too great for him who has died for love.

Consider 2dly, how many ways this Lord of ours, who is both our Creator and our Redeemer, communicates himself to us. He came down from heaven, and took our flesh and blood, in order to make us partakers of his divinity, and to carry us up to heaven. He offered up that flesh and blood upon the cross, as a sacrifice for us, to deliver us from sin and hell, and to purchase mercy, grace, and salvation for us. And he gives us here verily and indeed the same flesh and blood, to be our food, comfort, and support, in our pilgrimage, till he brings us, by the virtue of that food, to our true country, where he will give himself to us, for all eternity. Thus, in his incarnation and birth, he made himself our companion; in his passion and death, the price of our ransom; in the banquet of his last supper, our food and nourishment; and, in his heavenly kingdom, our eternal reward. O, my soul, what return shall we be able to make him, for giving himself so many ways to us. Alas! dear Lord, we have nothing to give but what is thine already: we have nothing to give that is worthy of thee. But be pleased to accept of all that our poverty can afford: and let this whole being of ours be for ever dedicated to thy love, as a whole, burnt-offering, to lie always upon thy altar,

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there burning and consuming with that divine fire, which thou camest to cast upon the earth; and which thou so much desiredst should be enkindled.

Consider 3dly, what ought to be our sentiments in coming to these divine mysteries, in consequence of our faith of the real presence of Jesus Christ, our Lord and our God, in this blessed sacrament. O what reverential awe ought we to bring with us, when we draw near to so tremendous a Majesty; in whose sight the whole creation is a mere nothing? What fear and dread, when we enter into his sanctuary, who is infinitely pure and holy; who sees all our guilt, and cannot endure iniquity? What sentiments of humility, when we reflect what he is, and what we are? What sorrow and contrition for all our past treasons and offences against this infinite goodness? What sentiments of gratitude for his giving us here his own self, in this wonderful manner? What desires of returning him love for love? O! how would a Christian be affected, if he visibly and evidently saw his God before him, in his approaching to this blessed sacrament! A lively faith, which apprehends things invisible, as if they were visible, would produce the like affections. O! give us, sweet Jesus, this lively faith.

Conclude ever to admire and adore the incomprehensible ways by which God is pleased to communicate himself to us. Resolve to correspond, in the best manner you are able, with the riches of his bounty and goodness, by approaching to these divine mysteries with faith, with fear, and with love.

Sunday within the Octave of Corpus Christi.

On Christ's inviting us to this heavenly Banquet.

CONSIDER first, those words of the parable of this day's Gospel. *A certain man made a great supper, and invited many*, Luke xiv. 16. And reflect how our Lord has indeed prepared a great banquet for us, in the institution of the blessed sacrament; and has invited us all to it. O, sacred ban-

quet, says the church, in the anthem, used during this octave, *in which Christ is received; the memory of his passion is kept up; the soul is filled with grace; and a pledge is given us of the glory to come!* A happy banquet, in which we feed upon the bread of heaven, and drink at the very source of the fountain of life. To this heavenly banquet the Son of God invites all the faithful, in the most loving manner. *Come to me*, says he, *all you that labour, and are burdened, and I will refresh you*, St. Matt. xi. 28. Ah! Christians, we all labour and lie under many and very heavy burthens, from the sins and miseries to which we are exposed during our mortal pilgrimage: and, in this heavenly banquet we come to Christ to be refreshed, nourished, and strengthened by him. O sweet invitation! O happy call to the source of grace here, and of endless glory hereafter!

Consider 2dly, how much our Lord is offended by all such as refuse to correspond to his loving invitation, and to come to his banquet. He has prepared this banquet out of pure love, that we may feast with him and he with us. He desires, out of pure love, to impart himself, and all his goods, to us: and therefore justly resents his love being slighted by us, and our preferring the farm, the oxen, the wife, in a word, the world, and the things of the world, before him and his banquet. Christians, if you have any love for Christ, surely you must be desirous of going to him, and entertaining yourselves with him in this great banquet of love. Love tends to union: and here it is that you are to be in so perfect a manner united to him, as *to abide in him*, and *live by him*. If you have any love for yourselves and for your own souls, you must gladly go to this banquet, in which you will find all your good, and all that can make you truly happy, both here and hereafter.

Consider 3dly, that, in staying away from Christ in the blessed sacrament, we do not only neglect his invitation, and slight his love, but also break through his ordinance, and violate his commandment. The

very institution of these heavenly mysteries, to be the support of our spiritual life, for the time of our mortality; implies a commandment for us to approach to them, and to make use of them. We should be guilty of self-murder, if we suffered the body to perish, by refusing to take that food which God has appointed for its sustenance: and are we not equally guilty of murdering our souls, if we suffer them to starve for want of the food and sustenance which our Lord has allotted them in this life-giving banquet? Truth itself assures us, (St. John vi. 54.) that, without this heavenly food, *we have no life in us*: as then we are most strictly bound to maintain the life of our souls, we are most strictly bound to use this food of life: and it is no less certain death to stay away from this blessed sacrament, than it is to come to it unworthily.

Conclude, my soul, to correspond henceforward with the loving invitation of thy dear Redeemer, by a frequent and worthy communion. Remember that the blessed sacrament is named *our daily bread*, in that prayer which our Lord himself has taught us. O! how happy should we be, if we lived in such purity and holiness, as to be worthy to be *daily* admitted, like the primitive Christians, to this *bread* of heaven. O let us do our best, so to live, so to behave, in every respect, that we may at least very often approach to this heavenly table, and there feast ourselves with Jesus Christ!

Monday within the Octave of Corpus-Christi.

On the excellent Fruits of this divine Banquet.

CONSIDER first, that in all the sacraments, the worthy receiver is made partaker of divine grace, which is conveyed into the soul through those heavenly channels: but the sacrament of the Eucharist has this advantage, above all the rest, that it imparts to the soul the very source itself from which all graces flow, by giving us Jesus Christ himself, the author of all grace; his own body, his blood, his soul

and his divinity : and therefore it is the most excellent of all the sacraments, and the most plentiful in its fruits. Amongst which fruits, that which is most peculiar to this divine sacrament, is, that it has the like qualities and properties, with regard to the soul, as our corporal food has with regard to the body, according to that of our Saviour, (*John vi.*) *the bread that I will give is my flesh, for the life of the world ; and again, my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed :* inasmuch as this bread supports our spiritual life, by the abundance of graces which it furnishes for the food and nourishment of our souls ; it repairs the daily decays we are liable to from our natural infirmity and corruption, and adds new strength and vigour to carry us on happily in our journey towards heaven. This is that *bread that strengthens the heart of man,* (*Psaln ciii. 15.*) that gives us force against all temptations : that weakens our passions and concupiscences ; that enables us to grow daily in virtue, and to run forward in the way of all the divine commandments, till we arrive at the mountain of God ; that is, at the very top of the perfection of a Christian life.

Consider 2dly, that this heavenly sacrament not only feeds, nourishes, and strengthens the soul, in order to the maintaining in us the life of grace here, and the bringing us to the life of glory hereafter ; but also tends, in a particular manner, to unite us by a *union of love*, with our sovereign good ; and to transform us into Christ himself. *He that eateth my flesh, saith our Lord, (John vi. 57, 58.) and drinketh my blood, abideth in me, and I in him. As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father ; so he that eateth me, the same also shall live by me.* The corporal food which we take, by the means of our natural heat and digestion, is changed into our corporal substance : but this spiritual food is not changed into us, but, by its heavenly heat, changes us into itself. Christ is *the food of them that are grown up*, saith St. Augustine ; *grow thou up, and*

thou shalt feed on him : yet thou shalt not change him into thyself, but thou shalt be changed into him. Our God is a consuming fire, says the Apostle, *Heb. xii. 29.* Fire has a power of transforming all things into itself, by communicating its nature and property to all such things as it lays hold on : how much more shall this bright flame, which communicates itself to us by the sacred mysteries, set our souls on fire with divine love, and change us into our beloved ?

Consider 3dly, that the best disposition for this happy transformation, and blessed union of love, is to approach to this divine sacrament with an entire resignation of ourselves, and of our whole being, into the hands of him whom we are going to receive. ‘ As I willingly offered myself to God my Father for thy sins, saith the *Beloved*, (l. iv. c. 8. of the *Fellowship of Christ*) with my hands stretched out upon the Cross, and my body naked, so that nothing remained in me which was not turned to a sacrifice, to appease the divine wrath : even so must thou willingly offer thyself daily to me in the mass, (and communion) together with all thy powers and affections, as heartily as thou art able, for a pure and holy oblation. What do I require more of thee, than that thou endeavour to resign thyself entirely to me ? Whatsoever thou givest, besides thyself, I shall not regard ; for I seek not thy gift, but thyself. As it would not suffice thee, if thou hadst all things but me ; so neither can it please me, whatever thou givest, as long as thou offerest not thyself. Offer thyself to me, and give thy whole self for God, and thy offering will be accepted. Behold I offered my whole self to the Father for thee, and have given my whole body and blood for thy food ; that I might be all thine, and thou mightest be always mine : but if thou wilt stand upon thyself, and wilt not offer thyself freely to my will, thy offering is not perfect ; nor will there be an entire union between us.—My sentence stands firm : *Except a man give up all, he cannot be my disciple.* If

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‘therefore thou desirest to be my disciple, give thyself up to me, with all thy affections.’

Conclude to give all for all, if thou hopest to relish the fruits of this heavenly sacrament; that is, to give thy whole self, without reserve, to him that gives his whole self to thee. Let this oblation of thyself to God, ever go before, accompany, and follow thy communion: there can be no *better* devotion.

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On the Dispositions we ought to bring to the holy Communion.

CONSIDER first, those words of St. Paul, (1 Cor. xi. 28.) *Let a man prove himself*, that is, let him try, and examine himself, by looking well into the state of his conscience, and setting all right in his interior, and so *eat of that bread*, &c. lest otherwise approaching to it *unworthily*, he make himself *guilty of the body and blood of the Lord*, (v. 27.) and receive his own judgment and condemnation, *not discerning the body of the Lord*, (v. 29.) so that the first, and most essential, disposition to a worthy communion, is purity of conscience, at least from all mortal sin. Whosoever presumes to approach to purity itself, in these sacred mysteries, must be clean and pure. *Sancta Sanctis*. Holy things are for them that are holy. *God will be sanctified in them that approach to him*, Levit. x. 3. And will execute justice and judgment on them that defile and profane his sanctuary, by entering in thither, and receiving *the Holy of holies*, with a soul polluted with wilful sin. Good God, keep me from being ever so miserable!

Consider 2dly, how great is the guilt of a communion made without this disposition of purity of conscience. It is a most grievous sacrilege, by profaning the most holy of all the sacraments. It is a most heinous injury and affront offered to our Lord himself in person, by bringing him into a polluted habitation. A soul under the guilt of mortal sin is

possessed by devils: the unworthy communicant, therefore, introduces the Lord of glory into a den of unclean spirits. He imitates the treason of Judas, by betraying him, as much as lies in him, to his enemies. He lays violent hands on our Lord, like the Jews; and, like them, is guilty of the body and blood of Christ. We should have a horror of the wretch, who, by wilful murder, had been guilty of innocent blood; though it were but of the meanest person living: what then ought we to think of ourselves, if, by an unworthy communion, we should be *guilty of the blood* of the Son of God himself? Would not such a crime as this cry to heaven for vengeance? Would it not very much darken the understanding, and harden the heart? Would it not put the soul even in the broad road of final impenitence? It would be according to the apostle, receiving *judgment*, that is, damnation, *to ourselves*. Ah! what penance, what floods of tears, would be required, to expiate so great a guilt.

Consider *Sdly*, that a soul, which approaches to the Holy of holies, in the sacred mysteries, ought not to content herself with only aiming at being pure from mortal sin; and, for that end, preparing herself by contrition and confession: but, ought also, as much as possible, to purify herself from all affections to venial sins; and all habits of any such sins; which, when fully deliberate, do a deal of mischief to the soul, and in particular, hinder her very much, from being sensible of the heavenly sweetness, and excellent fruits of this divine sacrament. Ah! Christians, could we but see those spots, those stains, those filthy scabs, that scurf, that leprosy, which these habits of lies of excuse, of anger, and impatience, of vanity, of curiosity, of indulging our sensuality in eating, drinking, &c. bring upon the soul: we should be sensible, how unfit they make us, for the embraces of this, our heavenly spouse, who is *beautiful above the sons of men*, Ps. xliv. 3.

Conclude ever to look to the state of thy con-

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science, and to purify it from all known and deliberate sin, whenever thou art preparing thy soul for Jesus Christ. Let thy intention also be *pure*; by having no other view, in thy communion, but his glory, and thy salvation: and thy affection *pure* from all inordinate love of creatures; when thou presentest thyself at his table: and thou shalt not fail to be a welcome guest.

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Of Devotion before Communion.

CONSIDER first, that the soul which desires to prepare a fit lodging for Jesus Christ, whom she is to receive in the blessed sacrament, must not only drive out Satan from her, and rid her inward house of the dirt and filth of sin; but must also procure the proper ornaments and furniture of virtue and devotion, to deck out herself, and her lodging; that it may be agreeable to the great king that comes to visit her. *The work is great*, said David, 1 Paralip. xxix. 1. *For a house is preparing, not for man, but for God*: yea, rather, in our case, for him that is both God and man. The ground-work of this preparation must be a lively faith, and a serious consideration of the work we are about; who it is that we are to receive, how great and glorious, how pure and holy, &c. And who we are that are going to receive him; how wretched and unworthy? This consideration must be accompanied, or followed, with earnest prayer, to beg of his infinite Majesty, that, since he knows our great poverty, and inability to prepare him a fit lodging, he himself would prepare one for himself; by sending before-hand those graces and virtues, and that fervour of devotion, which may fit our souls for him.

Consider 2dly, that the devotion, which we ought to bring with us to this blessed sacrament, consists, in the first place, in a most profound humility, and awful reverence, for these tremendous mysteries, sanctified by the real presence of Jesus Christ him-

self, the Lord of glory, and the fountain of all sanctity. O! how ought we to annihilate ourselves in the sight of this great Lord, and maker of heaven and earth! How ought we to fear and tremble, in consideration of our manifold treasons against him, and our base unworthiness! With what profound reverence ought we to approach to the Holy of holies, who lies here concealed under these sacramental veils! But then, lest this fear and reverence should go so far, as to drive us away from this fountain of life; it must be qualified with an humble confidence in the infinite goodness and mercy of him who invites us to come: and who is ever ready to receive, with open arms, his prodigal children, when they leave the husks of the swine, and return to him with a true sense of their unworthiness. O! blessed be his holy name for evermore.

Consider 3dly, that as nothing but pure love brings our Lord to us, in this divine sacrament; so the devotion he principally expects of us, when we approach to him, is a return of love. Which ever way we consider these sacred mysteries, we shall find that all things here call for our love; and indispensably oblige us to consecrate our whole heart, with all its affections, to this most lovely, and most loving Lord. His death and passion, endured for the love of us, which we here commemorate; an incomprehensible mystery of love, which will astonish men and Angels to all eternity: the wonders he has wrought in this heavenly sacrament, that he might make himself our food, and unite us to himself: the inestimable treasures he here imparts to us; the pledge he here gives us of our redemption and of our everlasting salvation; all concur to shew forth his love for us; and to claim a return of our whole heart. O, my soul, can we see so much love on his part, and not be inflamed with a desire of loving him with all our power? Can we remain cold when we approach to so great a fire! Remember thou art going to thy sovereign good; to the source of all grace, to the fountain of life: go

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then with a hunger and thirst, with an ardent desire to this great banquet of love, where thou art to feed upon thy lover himself; and he will not fail to fill thee with all that is good.

Conclude to exercise thyself always before communion, in acts of faith, reverence, and humility; in acts of hope and confidence in thy Saviour; in acts of divine love, and in ardent desires after him, accompanied with a grateful remembrance of the love he has shewed thee, in dying for thee; and in here giving himself to thee: and the more thou bringest with thee of this preparation and devotion, which enlarges as it were the vessel of thy heart, the more plentifully wilt thou draw of the waters of divine grace from this fountain of life.

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On Devotion after Communion.

CONSIDER first, that, as the soul must prepare herself to go to receive Jesus Christ, by proper devotion before communion; so she must also take care to entertain him in a proper manner, after she has received him; and to make good use of that favourable time, (most happy to her above all times, if well employed) during which, she has him really present with her, both in his divine and human nature; that is, both as God and man. It would be a gross affront, after being favoured with a visit of the King of heaven, desiring to feast himself with us, and bringing all his treasures with him to enrich our souls, if we should turn our backs immediately upon him, and take no further notice of him. The very meanest of our friends would have reason to resent so contemptuous a usage; how much more so great a Lord? See, my soul, if the little care thou hast taken to manage, to the best advantage, those happy minutes in which thou hast Jesus Christ with thee, by a proper devotion after communion, be not the true cause why thou hast reaped so little fruit from thy repeated communions; which otherwise might

long since have made thee a saint. O repent and amend !

Consider 2dly, what this devotion is, with which we are to entertain our Lord after receiving him. First, we are to welcome him, by faith, hope, and love : by a lively faith of all his mysteries ; but, in particular, that we have here really with us, in this blessed sacrament, him who is our Maker and our Redeemer ; infinite in majesty, and infinite in mercy ; and who brings with him all the treasures of heaven to enrich us : by a firm hope that he will now, by this blood of the covenant, take full possession of our souls, and make them his, both for time, and eternity : by an ardent love, aspiring with all our power and affection to an eternal union with our beloved, whom we here receive : I have found him whom my soul loveth ; I will hold him fast, and will never let him go. In the next place, we ought to cast ourselves down at his feet, and to pay him the best homage and adoration we are capable of ; bringing all the powers of our soul before him, and obliging them all to bow down to him, and worship him. But as all this ought to be accompanied with a lively sense of our unworthiness and sins, we must also take this opportunity of making an humble confession, like Magdalen, of all our treasons, at his feet, craving his mercy for what is past, and the grace of a change of heart and life for the time to come.

Consider 3dly, that, after these first homages, the soul must, for some time following her communion, keep close to our Lord, and give space for his grace to penetrate more and more into her interior, and to bring forth there its proper fruit. For this end, she must entertain him with praise and thanksgiving ; inviting all heaven and earth, all angels and saints, together with the whole creation, to join with her in his praises ; and wishing she had the hearts and tongues of all his creatures, that she might en-

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ploy them all in loving and glorifying him, in return for all the wonders of his love and goodness to her. She must also offer herself, and all that she has, without reserve, into his hands; that she may be for ever his; and that her whole being may be made as a holocaust, or whole burnt-offering, to evaporate to his glory. In fine, she must remember that she is now before the throne of grace; and that the Lord, whom she has with her, carries about with him all the treasures of divine grace; and therefore, she must lay before him all her wants, and spiritual necessities, and beg of him, by this opportunity, plentiful supplies of grace, both for herself and for the whole church.

Conclude, O my soul, to entertain thy Saviour in this manner, as often as thou shalt receive him in the divine mysteries. Take care also to be more than ordinarily recollected, on the whole day following thy communion, and to keep a great guard upon thyself; lest the enemy, who knows what a treasure thou hast received, and is therefore most busy about thee on this occasion, in hopes of robbing thee of it, should fling some stumbling block in thy way, to make thee fall into sin, either by passion or concupiscence; that so, by this means, he may drive Christ away from thee, and get possession of thy soul.

N. B. That as often as the Octave of Corpus-Christi shall fall before the thirteenth day of the month of June; the meditations that shall then be wanting in this place, are to be taken out of the number of those that are marked for the month of February; which were omitted at that time, to give place to the meditations appointed for Lent.

Of the blessed Eucharist as it is a Sacrifice.

June 14. **C**ONSIDER first, that the blessed Eucharist is not only a *sacrament*, in which we receive the body and blood of Christ for the food and nourishment of our souls; but is also a *sacrifice*, in which this same body and blood of Christ is offered up to God, in remembrance of his death and passion, for the honour and glory of God; in thanksgiving for all his benefits; to obtain pardon for all our sins, and grace in all our necessities. *Sacrifice* is a sovereign act of religious worship, due to God alone; inasmuch as it testifies, by the oblation made to him, that he is the sovereign Lord of all things; the master of life and death; our first beginning and last end. Now, from the beginning of the world, the children of God were accustomed to offer *sacrifices* to him; and this was the solemn worship in which they met together, to join in paying their homage and adoration to him. In the old law, a great variety of these *sacrifices* was prescribed, of *burnt-offerings*, of *sin-offerings*, of *peace-offerings*, &c. but all these were but figures, and imperfect shadows, of the great *sacrifice*, which was reserved for the law of grace, and which we celebrate in the blessed Eucharist; a *sacrifice*, in which the Son of God himself is both priest and victim.

Consider 2dly, that as the law of Moses was to give way to the law of Christ, of which it was a figure: and the priesthood of the sons of Aaron was to yield to him that is *a priest for ever, according to the order of Melchisedeck*: so all those ancient sacrifices of the old law, which were but figures and shadows, were to make way for the new sacrifice of Christ's institution; which is no other than that of his own body and blood: not as prefigured by the flesh and blood of calves or lambs; but as exhibited in truth, once in a bloody manner, on the altar of the cross; and daily to the end of the world, in an unbloody manner, on our altars, under the forms of

bread and wine; agreeably to the priesthood and sacrifice of Melchisedech, which he offered in bread and wine, *Gen. xiv. 18.* Hence, in the thirty-ninth psalm, spoken in the person of Christ, the sacrifice of his own body is substituted in the place of all those ancient victims, in these words: *Sacrifice and oblation thou didst not desire: but thou hast fitted a body to me,* (for so St. Paul reads it, *Heb. x. 5.*) *Burnt-offering, and sin-offering, thou didst not require; then said I, behold I come.* And this new sacrifice of the Christian church, this *clean offering*, which should be *offered in every place, among the Gentiles*, is foretold *Malach. i. 2.* and there accepted of by the Lord; at the same time as he declares he will receive no more of the Jewish sacrifices, *v. 10.*

Consider 3dly, that this great sacrifice of the Eucharist essentially consists in the consecration of the bread and wine, into the body and blood of Christ; and in the offering up of the same body and blood to God, by the ministry of the priest, as a perpetual memorial of the sacrifice of the cross, and a continuation of the same to the end of the world. For, by the separate consecration of the bread into the body of Christ, and of the wine into his blood, performed by the priest, in the name and person of Christ, our great high-priest, Christ Jesus presents himself to his Father, upon our altars, as slain for us; and his blood, as shed for us; and, under this figure of death, offers up his own body and blood, to answer all the ends and intentions for which we ought to offer sacrifice to God. Not as if there were any insufficiency in his sacrifice of the cross, by which he completely redeemed us, and opened to us the fountain of all mercy, grace, and salvation; but that we might have, in this eucharistic sacrifice, a standing memorial of our redemption; a daily means of applying the fruit of it to our souls; a daily communion one with another, by joining together in the solemn worship of sacrifice, as the children of God had always done from the beginning; and a daily

means of uniting ourselves in these mysteries with our high-priest and victim, Christ Jesus; and of coming to God with him and through him.

Conclude to frequent daily this great means of salvation, which our Lord has prepared for us, in the eucharistic sacrifice: admire and adore the wonders of the power and goodness of God, manifested to us therein, and resolve to correspond with them by faith, hope, and love.

On the Excellence of the eucharistic Sacrifice.

June 15. **C**ONSIDER first, that the excellence and dignity of a sacrifice is to be estimated by the excellence and dignity of the victim that is offered; of the priest that makes the offering; and of the ends for which the oblation is made. Now all these things concur to recommend, in the highest degree, the sacrifice of the blessed Eucharist; which, in substance, is the same with that which the Son of God offered upon the cross, because both the victim is the same, and the chief priest is the same: and both one and the other answer the same ends, though in a different manner. See then, my soul, and admire the excellence of this great sacrifice, which is offered on our altars: a sacrifice in which the whole passion and death of Jesus Christ is solemnly acted by himself in person; in such manner as to be himself both the priest and the victim; the sacrificer and the sacrifice. Christ Jesus, the Son of God, was the great high-priest of God and men, who solemnly offered his own body and blood upon the cross, a sacrifice to God for all mankind: his body and blood was the victim by which we are redeemed. And this same great high-priest of God and men, officiates also in person, in the sacrifice of the altar; and there offers up the same victim of his body and blood to his heavenly Father, in our behalf. O, can any thing be more divine than such a sacrifice, in which a God is the priest, and a God the victim.

Consider 2dly, the noble ends and intentions, for

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which this sacrifice is daily offered by the Son of God, in person, upon our altars; where he presents himself, attended by his heavenly host, as the high-priest of heaven and earth; and solemnly offers his body, as delivered up, broken and slain; and his blood as poured out. First, as a sacrifice of sovereign *adoration* and homage, praise and glory to God on high; infinitely more honoured by this worship, which he here receives from his own Son, mystically dying on our altars, than by all the holocausts, and burnt-offerings, of the patriarchs and prophets; and all the homage, which all the saints put together, either have, or ever could, offer to him; although their whole being were to evaporate to his glory. Secondly, he offers up his body and blood as a sacrifice of a general *thanksgiving*, of most sweet odour in the sight of God, for all his graces, blessings, and communications of his goodness, to any of his creatures; for our creation, preservation, redemption, &c. for his own great glory; for the whole church of heaven and earth; and for all that he has done in favour of Christ (the great head of the church of heaven and earth) according to his human nature. Thirdly, he offers his body and blood, together with his whole passion and death, as a sacrifice of a general *propitiation* for the sins of the living and the dead, in favour of whom he represents to his eternal Father the blood of the everlasting covenant. And fourthly, he offers the same body and blood, as a sacrifice of a general *supplication* for his whole family; that is, for his whole church, and for all its pastors and people; that all graces and blessings may be derived to their souls, from the fountains of their Saviour. O infinite goodness! What treasures hast thou opened for us in these divine mysteries!

Consider 3dly, that, as often as we go to celebrate, or assist at these sacred mysteries, it may be proper to represent to ourselves, that we are called upon, as by a royal proclamation from heaven, to be sanctified, and to come along with our great high-

priest, Jesus Christ, the Son of God, and with his whole church of heaven and earth; and to join in a most solemn sacrifice, that is going to be offered to God, for all the great ends above mentioned. Yes, Christians; for it is a most certain truth, that, in this divine sacrifice, we present ourselves at the altar of God, before the throne of his mercy, with Jesus Christ his Son at our head; and in the society of his whole family, the whole people of God, wherever they are; (for the sacrifice is offered by Jesus Christ in the name of them all) and that, by the hands of this our high-priest, and, with the concurrence of his whole church, we here offer up to God the most acceptable victim that can be presented to his Divine Majesty; the most agreeable adoration and thanksgiving that can be offered; the most powerful atonement for sin; and the most effectual means for obtaining all graces and blessings; by offering up the passion and death of the Son of God.

Conclude to approach always to these most sacred and sublime mysteries with the most profound veneration, lively faith, and ardent devotion; and ever to join your intention, according to all these four ends, with the principal offerer Jesus Christ, and with his whole church.

On the blessed Eucharist, as it is a Sacrifice of Adoration and Praise.

June 16. **C**ONSIDER first, the indispensable obligation incumbent upon man, as a rational creature, made by God, and for God, to present his homage of adoration, praise, and glory to his Maker. For this reason, the children of God, from the beginning, offered up sacrifices to the Deity; for this reason, they instituted *holocausts*, or whole burnt-offerings, in which the whole victim was consumed by fire, evaporating on God's altar, in testimony of his being the sovereign Lord of all: for this reason, the psalms were composed by divine inspiration; and appointed to be sung, together with musical instru-

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ments, to the praise and glory of God; and to accompany the sacrifices, offered in the temple of God. Such was the zeal of these ancient servants of God, for paying him the best homage they were able, of adoration and praise: and such ought to be, at all times, the sincere disposition of all that believe in God, as to be willing to adore and praise, worship and serve, this their first beginning, and last end, with all their power; and to consecrate their whole being to his glory. See, my soul, if this be thy disposition.

Consider 2dly, how little is all that man can offer of his own fund, even though his whole being were to evaporate to the glory of God, when compared with the infinite majesty of God, and the homage and adoration, which he deserves. If the whole creation could be made one holocaust, or burnt-offering, for the glory of God; alas! it would be all no more in the eyes of so great a king, than as if a grain of chaff were to be burnt in honour of some earthly monarch. Because there is no proportion between that which is finite, and that which is infinite: and therefore the whole creation, compared to God, is less than one grain of chaff, compared with an earthly monarch, or even with the whole creation. How mean then is all that man can offer of his own, or of any other creature's, and how unworthy and insufficient to be made a sacrifice of adoration and praise to the divine Majesty? See then, my soul, how greatly we are obliged to the Son of God, who, by the institution of the blessed Eucharist, has furnished us with a sacrifice of adoration, homage, praise, and glory, worthy of God: as being of an infinite value, by reason of the infinite dignity, both of the priest and victim.

Consider 3dly, how our Lord, expiring and dying upon the cross, in obedience to his Father's will, offered himself in sacrifice in such manner, that his death was not only in the nature of a *sin-offering*, or a sacrifice of propitiation for the sins of the world;

but also in the nature of a *burnt-offering*, (in which the whole victim is given to God without reserve) or a sacrifice of adoration, homage, praise, and glory. As then, in the blessed Eucharist, Christ himself, in person, celebrates his own death, and offers up the same sacrifice, in substance, with that which he offered expiring upon the cross; so we have here the same adoration, homage, praise, and glory, offered by Christ, as God's high-priest, and our high-priest, to his eternal Father: and this sacrifice of adoration, homage, praise, and glory, he has made over to us: so that we are enabled, by joining with him in these sacred mysteries, to offer up daily to our God, a homage and adoration of infinite value.

Conclude with admiration of the infinite power, wisdom, and goodness of God, manifested to us in the institution of this divine sacrifice, by means of which a victim of infinite value is daily offered, and will be daily offered, to the end of the world, upon a million of altars, by a priest of infinite dignity, to give infinite honour and glory to his divine Majesty; and to be, at the same time, an inexhaustible source of all good to us. O! let us daily and hourly join our adoration and praise with that which is, in every place, offered by our high-priest, in these divine mysteries; and it will not fail of being acceptable through him.

On the blessed Eucharist, as it is a Sacrifice of Thanksgiving.

June 17. **C**ONSIDER first, that we are also indispensably obliged to return due thanks to God, for all his bounties, favours, and mercies to us; and that, as these are boundless and infinite, he has a right to call for a return of all the gratitude and love we are capable of; and that nothing less than an infinite thanksgiving can be equivalent to the debt we owe him. But O! how little is all that our store can afford, towards discharging so immense a debt?

If we should even offer him our whole being, and this could be a return for the great benefit of our creation, by which he has given us this being, what should we have left to give him; or what return should we be able to make him for our redemption, for our preservation, for our vocation, and for so many others his benefits? and above all for that eternal free love of his for us, which is the source of all these benefits? See then how good this God has been, in furnishing us, by the means of the eucharistic sacrifice, with a standing fund to enable us to discharge this infinite debt, and to render him a thanksgiving worthy of him.

Consider 2dly, that as all the *thanks-offerings* of the law of nature, and of the law of Moses, fell infinitely short of answering, in a proper and sufficient manner, the obligation incumbent on mankind, of returning due thanks to God; the Son of God himself became man, to make himself our priest and victim; and, in that quality, to offer up in our behalf a worthy sacrifice of thanksgiving, no less infinite, by reason of the dignity of his person, than those favours and mercies were, for which he makes this return of thanks. This sacrifice of thanksgiving he offered once upon the cross, and now offers daily in the Eucharist, upon a million of altars, throughout the world; and, in this offering he expects that his whole family of heaven and earth should join with him; that, with him, and through him, they may make a daily return of worthy thanks for all God's blessings, bestowed upon both him and them. See, my soul, thou be never wanting in this duty.

Consider 3dly, what this thanksgiving is that we are to offer up daily to God, in the sacrifice of the blessed *Eucharist*; a sacrifice which takes its very name from *thanksgiving*. 1. We are to return thanks to God for his own great glory, manifested in all his works. 2. We are to thank him in particular, for the great work of our redemption. 3. We are

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to offer up to him this sacrifice in thanksgiving for the incarnation and birth of his Son; and for all the blessings bestowed upon him, according to his human nature; for his doctrine and miracles; for his passion and death; for his resurrection and ascension; and for all that power which is given him in heaven and earth. 4. We are likewise to offer up this sacrifice in thanksgiving for ourselves, and for the whole church, triumphant, militant, and patient; and for all that mercy, grace, and salvation, which has, at any time, been derived upon any man from the sovereign source of all good, through Jesus Christ. See, Christians, how much we all, in general, have to thank God for; besides the special favours for which each one in particular stands indebted to the divine bounty. But infinite thanks be to his infinite goodness, who has provided for us this sacrifice of infinite value, in which we may daily present ourselves before him, in the company of Jesus Christ his Son, and make him a suitable and acceptable offering, through him, for all his favours.

Conclude to unite daily thy intentions with those with which Jesus Christ daily offers this sacrifice, upon all the altars throughout his church; the thanksgiving offered by him, and nothing less will be equal to thy debt.

On the blessed Eucharist, as it is a Sacrifice of Propitiation.

June 18. **C**ONSIDER first, that the sacrifice of the body and blood of Christ is also a *sin-offering*; or a sacrifice of propitiation, for obtaining mercy and pardon for our sins. The debt, man contracted to the divine justice by sin, was infinite; and nothing that any one pure man, or even all mankind put together could do, or suffer, for the expiation of sin, could bear any kind of proportion with that debt, or go any part of the way towards the cancelling of it; much less could the blood of oxen, or of goats, used in the ancient *sin-offerings*

of the law, have any virtue in them to wash away sin. Therefore did the Son of God take a body and blood for us, to substitute this new victim in the place of those old ones, *Psalm xxxix*. This body and blood he offered in sacrifice upon the cross, for the sins of all mankind: with this he paid our ransom, and completely redeemed us: this same he has bequeathed to us in the sacrament, and in the sacrifice of the blessed Eucharist; in which, as our priest and victim, he daily appears before his Father in our behalf; and represents his passion and death to him to obtain the forgiveness of our sins. Thus the sacrifice of the Eucharist is truly *propitiatory*, in virtue of that blood of the New Testament, the fruit of which it applies to our souls.

Consider 2dly, what an advantage it is to our souls to have here daily celebrated amongst us, *this propitiatory* sacrifice, in which the Lamb that taketh away the sins of the world, presents to his eternal Father, upon our altars, under the mystical veils that represent his death, his body, as broken and slain for us, and his blood as shed for our sins: and, with this body and blood, intercedes to obtain mercy and pardon for us. What sinner can despair of the forgiveness of his sins (if, like the prodigal child, he desires to return home to his true father) when he sees here before him, bleeding as it were upon the altar, the victim, by whose blood all our sins were cancelled? When he sees the great high-priest of God and man, offering a sacrifice for the remission of his sins? *O let us go therefore with confidence to this throne of grace: that we may obtain mercy, and find grace in seasonable aid.* Heb. iv. 16.

Consider 3dly, my soul, how much occasion thou hast for this sacrifice of propitiation. Alas, how great is the debt thou owest to divine justice, for thy numberless sins! *Recount to thyself, O sinner, in the presence of thy God, all thy years in the bitterness of thy soul,* Isai. xxxviii. 15. See how very early thou didst incur the dreadful guilt of mortal sin:

by turning away from God to follow vanity, and thereby breaking through thy baptismal engagements; profaning God's temple within thee; affronting the Spirit of God; and treading under foot the blood of the Son of God! Reflect how much thy sins have been multiplied, after so bad a beginning, every day, from that time to this very hour. Ah! *What shalt thou offer to the Lord that is worthy? Wherewith shalt thou kneel before the high God?* Mich vi. 6. Neither *holocausts*, nor *thousands of rams*; nor yet thy own blood, can expiate thy guilt. The blood of Christ alone can do it: and with this thou kneelest before the Most High, when thou assistest at the sacrifice of the altar; where this blood is applied to thy soul. Neither is it applicable to thy soul alone; but the inexhaustible treasures of mercy, which are laid open in these sacred mysteries, give us a confidence to join all here in a body, with our great advocate and high priest at our head, and to plead for mercy, through this same blood, for our brethren also, both living and dead; that we may obtain for them all the remission of their sins, and the discharge of all the debt of punishment due to their sins.

Conclude to embrace this great means of obtaining mercy and grace by assisting daily, if it lies in thy power, at this propitiatory sacrifice, with a contrite and humble heart; and making, on this occasion, a confession of all thy sins, at the feet of Jesus Christ, who is here both priest and victim: if thou art diligent in this practice, the blood of Christ will infallibly obtain for thee the remission of thy sins.

On the blessed Eucharist, as it is a Sacrifice of Prayer and Supplication.

June 19. **C**ONSIDER first, that the blessed Eucharist, inasmuch as it is a sacrifice, does not only in a most perfect manner, answer the designs and intentions of the *burnt-offerings*, thanks-

offerings, and *sin-offerings*, of the law, by being offered up for the adoration and praise of the Deity, in thanksgiving for all his benefits, and for the remission of all our sins; but also, with infinite advantage, answers the ends of the *peace-offerings* of the ancients; by being offered up for obtaining all graces and blessings from God, through the blood of Jesus Christ. *No one can come to the Father but by him*, St. John xiv. 6. Here we approach to God both by him, and with him too; both as our priest and as our victim. *If you ask the Father any thing in my name*, saith he, (St. John xvi. 23.) *he will give it you*. O how wholesome then must this sacrifice of *supplication* be to all Christian people, in which we not only ask in the name of Jesus Christ, but come with his sacred blood before the throne of grace; and in which, he himself in person pleads for us!

Consider 2dly, how many and great our necessities are, both in general and in particular, and how great the miseries we are liable to; that you may set a greater value upon this never-failing source of all blessings, which the divine bounty has opened to us, in the sacrifice of the Eucharist. Alas! of ourselves we can do nothing: we can neither believe, hope, love, nor repent; nor make so much as any one step towards our justification, or salvation, without the help of heaven; we are encompassed on all sides with dreadful dangers, that threaten us with the worst of evils, both for time and eternity. Ah! how true it is that we are indeed *wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked!* Apoc. iii. 17. But, in this sacrifice, our Lord has provided us with an inexhaustible fund of grace; supplied without ever decaying, *out of the fountains of our Saviour*, Isai. xii. 3. in order to answer all our necessities, to heal all our infirmities, to guard us against all dangers, and to redress all our miseries. O blessed be his infinite goodness! O, my soul, whatsoever thy wants are, here they are to be supplied: run here to Jesus

Christ, thy priest and sacrifice; and with him, and through him, to his Father: and he will give thee all good, and himself into the bargain.

Consider 3dly, that in this sacrifice of supplication and prayer, we are not limited or confined in our addresses, as if we were to ask and to receive for ourselves alone: but, as we have here upon the altar the victim slain for the general redemption of the whole world; and as the high priest of God and man here appears before his heavenly Father, in behalf of all mankind; we are authorized to put up our petitions with him, and through him, for the general necessities of the whole church of God, and of all mankind; that the holy name of God may be sanctified by all; that his kingdom of grace may be propagated through all nations, and through all hearts; that his will may be done by all, and in all things; that his church may be exalted by the sanctity of her prelates and pastors, and propagated throughout the world; that all infidels, heretics, and sinners, may be converted; that all errors and abuses may be corrected; that we may be preserved from all wars, plagues, famines, earthquakes, and all other evils; and that, *being delivered from the hands of our enemies, we may serve God, without fear, in holiness and justice before him, all our days*, St. Luke i. 74, 75. All this, with all other graces and blessings, we are encouraged to ask with confidence for the whole world, in this sacrifice, where Christ is both victim and priest.

Conclude to manage always, to the best advantage, that favourable time when thou art assisting at the sacrifice of the altar: for it is then thou art near the fountain's head, from whence all our good must flow.

*On the Devotion with which we are to assist at the
Sacrifice of the Altar.*

June 20. **C**ONSIDER first, that these heavenly mysteries which we celebrate in the sacrifice of the altar, and the real presence of Jesus Christ the Son of God, whom we believe to be truly there, both as priest and victim, require that we should assist thereat, with all possible devotion; but especially with a lively faith; a most profound reverence; and a heart inflamed with love for that Lamb of God, who there offers himself in sacrifice for us. The servants of God have sometimes seen Angels assisting round the altar, and adoring their Lord: open thou thy eyes, my soul, as often as thou art present at the sacred mysteries, to contemplate, with a lively faith, this Lord of Angels upon our altars, accompanied with these heavenly Spirits; and see thou worship him there with that awful reverence and tender affection, which his infinite Majesty, and his infinite love for thee, require at thy hands. Reflect on that profound respect with which the people of God, in ancient times, revered the sanctuary, in which the ark of the covenant was deposited; so that no one but the high-priest, and he but once a year, was allowed to enter within the veil. O how much more profoundly oughtest thou to reverence this true sanctuary of God, and the Lord himself of the covenant, present in our tremendous mysteries!

Consider 2dly, that as this sacrifice has an especial relation to the passion and death of the Son of God, in such manner as to be in effect the same sacrifice, the same victim, and the same priest; so the devotion with which we are to assist at the altar, should have a particular relation to the sufferings of Jesus Christ. Our Saviour himself here officiates in person, and acts, as in a sacred tragedy, his whole passion and death; we ought then to accompany him in this action, with suitable affection and devotion. Had we been present, with a true belief in him, when

he was offering upon the cross the sacrifice of our redemption, with what sentiments of love and gratitude, with what deep sense of sorrow and repentance for our sins, with what fervour of devotion, should we have waited upon him there; meditating upon his infinite goodness and love for us, manifested in his passion; and on the heinous enormity of our sins, which could not be expiated but with his sacred blood? With the like sentiments of devotion ought we to assist at this solemn memorial, and representation of his passion, in the eucharistic sacrifice.

Consider 3dly, that as often as we assist at this sacrifice, we are not only to commemorate, by meditation; the passion and death of the Son of God; but also to take along with us, as it were, to God the Father, his Son slain for us, and his precious blood shed for us. And this in such manner as to offer up ourselves also to him, with the whole church, which is the mystical body of his Son, by his hands; and in union with the offering which he, who is our head, there makes of himself. We are also, at the same time, to join our intentions with his; as he is our chief priest, and principal offerer; and with those of the whole people of God; according to the four great ends of sacrifice; going, as it were in a body, with Jesus Christ at our head: and, with him, we are to offer adoration, praise, and thanksgiving to God; and to pray, and beg mercy, through him, both for ourselves and for all the world. Thus the whole church of God daily joins herself with Christ Jesus her head, both as the offerer and the offering, in these divine mysteries.

Conclude with a resolution of doing thy best to assist daily at this great sacrifice with a suitable devotion. Go thither in the same spirit as if thou wert going to Mount Calvary, to contemplate there thy divine Redeemer, offering himself a bleeding sacrifice for the sins of the world. And see thou remember to join thy offering of thyself by his hands, with

the offering he there makes of himself; and thy intentions with his intentions.

On a spiritual Communion.

June 21. **C**ONSIDER first, that, next to the consecration, in which consists the very essence of the sacrifice of the altar; inasmuch as the body and blood of Christ are thereby exhibited, and presented to God, for all the four ends of sacrifice; the principal part is the communion. Now, as all the assistants ought to join with the priest, in offering up, by his hands, and by the hands of the invisible High-Priest Christ Jesus, this most holy sacrifice, for all those great ends; so it were to be wished, that all would join with him in the communion also; at least by making a *spiritual communion*, as often as they hear mass. This *spiritual communion*, when made with proper devotion, brings Jesus Christ to our souls in spirit, so that, though we do not receive verily and indeed, his body and blood, we partake plentifully of his heavenly grace, and unite ourselves in spirit to him, who is the fountain of all grace. O let us continually aspire after this union of grace and love.

Consider 2dly, that, in order to make this spiritual communion with fruit, we must be in the state of grace: Jesus Christ will not unite himself to a soul, in which Satan dwells. Then we must invite our Lord into our inward house, 1. By a *lively faith* of his real presence on our altars; of what he is; of what he has done and suffered for the love of us; and what those treasures are, which he carries about with him in this sacrament, and which he desires to impart to us. 2. By an *ardent desire*, in the way of hunger and thirst, after this life-giving food. 3. By a *profound humility*, in the acknowledgment of our great unworthiness to receive him sacramentally; and bewailing our manifold sins in his presence. And lastly, by *enflamed affections* of love, offering our whole selves to him, and pressing him to come, and

take full possession of our souls for time and eternity. Such devotion as this will not fail to bring him to us, and engage him to open his heavenly treasures in our favour.

Consider 3dly, that a spiritual communion may be made, with fruit to the soul, not only as often as we assist at the sacrifice of the altar, but also at any other hour we please, either of the day or night : and this, by sighing after Jesus Christ ; by inviting him into our souls ; by offering our whole souls to him ; by embracing him and loving him with all our power. For he loves all them that love him ; he is quickly found by all that seek him ; and gives himself to all that give themselves to him. O happy exchange ! Give then thyself, my soul, at all times, to this thy true lover, to this thy sovereign and infinite good ; and he will communicate himself to thee. This kind of communion is not tied to time or place, but will bring thy God to thee whenever thou pleasest : and what canst thou receive, or desire, either greater or better ?

Conclude to make a spiritual communion, every day of thy life ; and even to repeat it often in the day : the oftener the better. This frequent repetition of acts of faith, love, and desire, will unite thee to thy sovereign good ; so that he will live in thee, and thou in him.

On the Sacrament of Penance.

June 22. **C**ONSIDER first, the infinite goodness of God, who, not content with instituting in our favour the sacrament of *baptism*, for the forgiveness of all foregoing sins, and to give a new birth to our souls, to make us his children ; the sacrament of *confirmation*, to give us the Holy Ghost in our souls, to make us strong and perfect Christians, and soldiers of Christ ; and the sacrament of the blessed *Eucharist*, to feed and nourish our souls, to everlasting life, with the body and blood of Christ : has also considered our frailty and misery, (by which we

are so unhappily liable to lose the grace of our baptism, and to fall away from him by sin,) in the institution of the sacrament of *penance*, for the forgiveness of the sins we fall into after baptism; as a plank, by which we may still escape to the happy shore of eternal life, after having, by mortal sin, suffered shipwreck, and lost the treasures of baptismal grace and innocence. Embrace, O my soul, this infinite goodness of thy God : adore, praise, and give thanks to thy Saviour, for this his merciful institution. Alas ! what must have become of thee, after so many sins, if he had not ordained for thee this wholesome bath, of easy access, to wash away, with his own most precious blood, those stains of thine, which otherwise must have been the eternal fuel of hell's merciless flames ?

Consider *adly*, what this sacrament of penance is, and of what extensive virtue and efficacy : we have the account of the institution of it, *St. John* xx. 21, 22, 23. Where he, to whom *all power is given, in heaven and earth*, was pleased to impart one branch of this power to his apostles and their lawful successors in the ministry, in these words : *As the Father hath sent me, I also send you—Receive ye the Holy Ghost : whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven : and whose sins you shall retain, they are retained them.* This absolution of penitent sinners, we call the *sacrament of penance*. And a *sacrament* it is : because it is an *outward sign of inward grace*, even of the grace of the remission of our sins, *by virtue of the institution of Jesus Christ*, ascertained in the ample commission above rehearsed. A commission that comes to the church stamp'd with the broad seal of heaven, from him that has in his hand the whole power of heaven : a commission that is not restrained as to time or place, nor makes exception of any sin whatsoever ; provided the sinner applies, with proper dispositions, to the power of the *keys* granted by Christ to his church, *St. Matt.* xvi. O ! how rich art thou, O Lord, in mercy ! O ! how true it is,

that thy tender mercies to us, are over all thy works ! The angels committed but one sin, and that in thought only, and they were cast off, and condemned for ever, without being allowed either time, or grace, to repent, or any means of forgiveness or reconciliation : we sin again and again ; and thou hast still a mercy in store for us, in this sacrament of reconciliation. O may all heaven and earth give glory to thee for ever, for the wonders of thy goodness, and thy love for us !

Consider 3dly, that the sacrament of penance, besides the *absolution*, given by the minister of Christ in his name, and by his authority ; requires also, on the part of the sinner, *contrition*, *confession*, and *satisfaction* ; at least in desire ; the absolution pronounced by the priest, will have no effect ; it will only serve to the sinner's greater condemnation, without those three necessary ingredients of this sacrament. *Contrition* is a hearty sorrow for having offended so good a God ; with a full determination, by the help of his grace, not to be guilty of the like for the future. *Confession* is a full and sincere accusation of ourselves as to the kind and number of our sins, to the pastors of the church, who have received from Christ the charge of our souls. *Satisfaction* is a faithful performance of the penance enjoined by them for our sins. Christians, see upon what articles, you are to be admitted to a reconciliation with your Father, after you have gone away from him by sin. You must renounce, by sincere contrition, the husks of swine, which you have unhappily preferred before him : you must humble yourselves, by a sincere and sorrowful confession to his vice-generals, of your past errors and disloyalties : and you must offer yourselves to make all the *satisfaction* that lies in your power : and then he will receive you with open arms, as he did the prodigal son, St. *Luke* xv.

Conclude to set a great value upon this sacred institution, and to have a speedy recourse to it, when-

ever you find you have fallen into sin. But see it be with due dispositions.

On the Confession of our Sins.

June 23. **C**ONSIDER first, that God always expected from sinners an humble confession of their sins. This he prescribed in the Old Law, *Numb. v. 6, 7. When a man or woman shall commit any sin that men commit, to do a trespass against the Lord, and that person be guilty, then they shall confess their sin which they have done, &c.* This he ordained in the New Law, by the very institution of the sacrament of penance: which necessarily includes, or presupposes, confession. This was signified by the ordinance of the law, (*Levit. xiii. and xiv.*) prescribing, that such as were infected with the leprosy, which was a figure of sin, should shew themselves to the priests, and be under their inspection and direction. This was practised by the people that came to St. John the Baptist, (*St. Matt. iii. 6.*) and by the primitive Christians, disciples of the apostles, (*Acts xix. 18. and St. James v. 16.*) This was always insisted upon in the church of God: and surely nothing could be more just, than that the sinner should submit to this little humiliation, as some small atonement for the pride and presumption by which he has rebelled against his God.

Consider 2dly, the many advantages the soul receives from the Catholic practice of humbly confessing our sins to the ministers of Christ, whom he has tied up by all laws to a perpetual and indispensable secrecy. It procures us proper medicines, and prescriptions, for all our spiritual maladies, which we here lay open to the Physician of the soul: it furnishes us with counsel in our doubts, comfort in our sorrows, and remedies against temptations: it gives present ease to the wounded conscience; it rectifies our errors, enlightens our ignorance, restrains our passions: it gives new strength of resolution, and

courage to do better for the time to come : and, what is one of its greatest advantages, it humbles the soul, and teaches us to know, and to despise, ourselves. O what blessings are entailed upon this sacred institution of confession ! O how much do these out-balance the momentary confusion, that may accompany the declaration of our sins.

Consider 3dly, that the principal advantage of an humble and sorrowful confession of our sins is, that it is the means of divine appointment, for obtaining the absolution and remission of all our transgressions, and reinstating us in God's favour and grace ; and this by virtue of the commission given by Jesus Christ to his ministers ; with a solemn asseveration, that *whatsoever they should bind upon earth, should be bound also in heaven : and that whatsoever they should loose upon earth, should be loosed also in heaven*, St. Matt. xviii. 18. O ! how happy would that criminal account himself, who should be allowed to escape the hands of human justice, by a sorrowful acknowledgment of all his crimes in secret to his judge, or to one appointed by his judge ! But how much more happy is the penitent Christian, when by an humble confession of all his sins, with a sincere repentance, to the minister of Jesus Christ, he is assured of being delivered, not out of the hands of men, that can only kill the body, and then can do no more ; but out of the hands of the living God, who otherwise will cast both body and soul into hell ; and not only of being delivered out of the hands of divine justice, but of being received into the arms of his loving kindness, and made once more a friend and a child of God, and an heir of his eternal kingdom.

Conclude by giving thanks to the divine bounty, for having ordained for us this easy means of reconciliation after sin, and annexed so many graces and blessings to it. But beware of abusing this most wholesome and sacred institution, by making it an occasion of sinning more freely, or by using it only

as a thing of course, or as an empty ceremony, without any true change of heart.

On the Nativity of St. John the Baptist.

June 24. **C**ONSIDER first, how just it is, that we should shew a particular honour and veneration to this saint, of whom our Saviour tells us, *St. Matt. xi. 18. that there hath not risen among them that are born of women, a greater than John the Baptist. He was a burning and a shining light, St. John v. 35. The special friend of the bridegroom, chap. iii. 29. The angel sent before his face to prepare his way, St. Matt. xi. 10. A prophet, and more than a prophet, v. 9. An apostle sent from God, for a witness, to give testimony of the light, that all men might believe through him, St. John i. 6, 7. A martyr, in laying down his life for justice and truth. An hermit, in retiring from his childhood into the deserts, and there consecrating his days and nights to the exercises of devotion and self-denial. A zealous preacher of penance, to reclaim sinners from their evil ways, and to prepare them for Christ. A virgin, by the perpetual purity of his life. See here, Christians, what we have to honour in this great saint; what we have to embrace and love in him; and what lessons we are to learn from him.*

Consider 2dly, that in other saints the church honours the day of their departure out of this transitory life, which she celebrates as their *birth-day*: because on that day they pass from this dying life here below, to their true life with God above, and are happily born there, where they shall never die. But, in St. John Baptist, we honour also the day of his birth into this mortal life, by reason of his being sanctified in his mother's womb, and of the wonders which accompanied his birth, which was to the world, sitting till then in darkness and in the shades of death, like the first dawning of the new day-light, which the Son of God, whose forerunner he was, was coming to bring amongst us. Therefore we re-

joice in his nativity, (as the angel foretold, *Luke i. 14.*) and glorify the Author of all these wonders, by celebrating, with love and gratitude, this birth of St. John, as a prelude of our redemption. See, my soul, if these be thy dispositions on this day.

Consider 3dly, that St. John was a saint from his birth : he always preserved his innocence, and wholly dedicated himself, from his very childhood, to the love and service of his Maker. To this end he retired, when very young, to the wilderness, to fly the corruptions and distractions of the world : *The child grew, says St. Luke, chap. i. 80. and was strengthened in spirit ; and was in the deserts until the day of his manifestation to Israel.* Happy they that imitate this early piety of our saint ! happy they that wholly consecrate themselves, from their tender years, to divine love ! O how good it is for a man, when he hath borne the sweet yoke of the Lord from his youth, *Lament. iii. 27,* O my soul, that we had been so happy ! Let us begin now at least ; and, from this moment, let us dedicate ourselves to be servants of divine love, henceforth and for ever.

Conclude, if thou desirest to imitate the early piety and innocence of St. John, to follow him as much as possible into the wilderness ; by retiring at least from the wicked ways of the world ; from the infected air of the world ; from the company and conversation of the slaves of the world ; from the dangerous pastimes of worldlings ; and from all the occasions of sin, so common in the world. And especially take care to make a private cell for thyself, in thy own interior ; and to keep thyself there, by inward recollection, in a holy solitude with thy God.

On the Lessons we are to learn from St. John Baptist.

June 25. **C**ONSIDER first, that the design of keeping the festivals of the saints, is not only to honour God in his saints, and to give him thanks for the grace and glory bestowed upon them, through Jesus Christ; but also to encourage the faithful to an imitation of their virtues; in hopes of arriving one day at their blessed company, by walking in their footsteps. If then we desire to keep the festival of St. John in a suitable manner, we must endeavour to learn the lessons he teaches by his great example. His whole life in the desert was one continued exercise of prayer and mortification: these are lessons that all Christians must in some measure learn, that desire to come to the eternal society of the saints. If our daily occupations, if human frailty, will not allow us to have that *continued* attention to God, which St. John had, at least we must *frequently* and *seriously* aspire after him, in the midst of all our other employments, and give, every day, a regular and competent time to the holy exercise of prayer. If we cannot think of bringing ourselves to such hard diet, cloathing, and lodging, as his was: at least, we must daily retrench superfluities in eating, drinking, cloathing, sleep, and unnecessary diversions; we must mortify our vanity, curiosity, and sensuality, and learn on many occasions to renounce our own will, to give up our own humours, and to contradict our darling inclinations.

Consider 2dly, the humility of St. John, how mean an opinion he had of himself, how little regard he had to the esteem and applause of the world; how he freely and openly professed to the people, who had the highest opinion of him, that he was neither Christ, nor Elias, nor a prophet, but only a *voice of one crying in the wilderness*, &c. and unworthy of doing the meanest office to him that was to follow him: how glad he was, when he saw himself de-

crease in the opinion of the world, and his glory eclipsed by the preaching and miracles of Jesus Christ. O blessed humility, which alone art capable of making any one *great before the Lord* ! All other virtues are grounded on thee ; without thee, they degenerate into vices. Christians, let us study well this most necessary lesson.

Consider 3dly, the zeal of St. John for the glory of God, and his constancy in maintaining justice, and truth, without respect of persons, even to the laying down his life in the cause. He was not *a reed shaken with the wind* : he knew not what it was to flatter worldlings in their evil ways, or to comply, through human respects, with any thing contrary to conscience. He would not call *evil good, nor good evil*. He zealously preached to sinners of all degrees and conditions, the necessity of effectually renouncing their evil ways, and bringing forth worthy fruits of penance ; he denounced the heavy judgments of God to the impenitent, and encouraged the penitent with the prospect of his mercy. Christians, let us attend to these lessons, which the Baptist so strongly inculcated, both by word and work. The God whom we worship is the sovereign justice and the sovereign truth : If then we would be Christians indeed, we ought, like St. John, to be willing to lay down our very lives, rather than to offend against justice and truth.

Conclude to walk in the footsteps of St. John, and they will bring thee to Christ. He was sent to prepare the people for him, and to direct them to him ; attend to his preaching and to his example, and he will do this good office for thee.

On the Preparation we ought to make for Confession.

June 26. **C**ONSIDER first, that confession, without due dispositions, will only serve for our greater condemnation : so that the great business of a sinner, that desires to receive such an absolution from his sins as may be ratified in heaven, must

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be to procure the necessary dispositions, by making a due preparation for confession. And as these dispositions must come from the giver of all good gifts : and the sinner has removed himself to a great distance from him, amongst the husks of swine, the first part of his preparation must be, to begin to turn towards God, with a great sense of the misery of his present condition, by fervent prayer and desire. The raising up of a soul to life, which is dead to God by mortal sin, is, in effect, no less a miracle of the divine power, than the calling of Lazarus out of his grave, after he had been four days dead and buried : there can be then no expectation of succeeding in so arduous an undertaking, without taking him along with us, by earnest prayer, who alone can raise the dead. No : my soul, the most essential conditions of a good confession, are a change of heart, and a perfect sincerity in the accusation of ourselves, even of those sins which we are most ashamed of ; and who but God can change the heart of man, or bring him to overcome his pride, by a full confession of his shameful sins ? Or how can so great a grace as this is, be procured without hearty prayer ?

Consider 2dly, that another necessary part of the preparation for confession, is to find out, by a serious examination, the true state of our interior. Alas ! it is one of our greatest misfortunes, not to know ourselves : and it is much to be feared, that many pass their whole lives under the guilt of mortal sins of pride, envy, hatred, detraction, of omissions of essential duties, &c. which, for want of a serious and impartial examination of the true state of their consciences, they neither confess, nor repent of, nor amend. Hence their confessions are null, their communions sacrilegious ; they go on, all their life time, in their sins, and they die in their sins. O my soul, see this be not thy case : see thou labour in earnest to know thyself : see thou examine seriously thy whole interior, that thou mayest be able to discover by the light of God, which thou must im-

plore, those lurking evils, which thy busy self-love, or the false maxims and practices of deluded worldlings, may otherwise disguise under false pretences, and hide from thy eyes.

Consider 3dly, that the principal and most necessary preparation for a good confession, is true *contrition*; that is, a hearty sorrow and detestation for our sins, by which we have offended so good a God; with a firm resolution of a thorough amendment for the time to come, and of making the best satisfaction we can for our past offences. This is the most essential part, both of the virtue, and of the sacrament of penance. This we must take the most pains about, when we are to go to confession. This we must labour to procure by serious and deep considerations of the most moving truths, and by repeated and fervent prayers: and never leave off knocking at the door of the divine mercy, till he is pleased to open to us, and to touch our hearts. Alas! none but he can bring forth the waters of true compunction out of these hard rocks.

Conclude to be diligent in every branch of this necessary preparation, as often as thou pretendest to make thy peace with God by confession: lest otherwise, instead of obtaining a discharge, thou encrease thy debt.

On Motives of Repentance.

June 27. **C**ONSIDER first, the motives we have to repent for our sins, from the consideration of the filthiness of that ugly monster sin, and of its heinous enormity in the sight of God. Mortal sin is infinitely odious to him, because infinitely opposite to his sovereign goodness, and to all his divine attributes. It is infinitely pernicious to our souls; it makes them like very devils in the eyes of God. It robs us of divine grace, which is the true life of the soul, and of all our good: it is a poison which, in a moment, brings present death, and condemns us to

a second and eternal death. It is an evil so black, so odious, so hideous, that hell itself has nothing worse. It leaves behind it a cursed stain, the perpetual fuel of the merciless flames of hell, which endless ages will never be able to efface. Alas ! my poor soul, how wretched then has thy case been all this while thou hast been in sin ! How ugly and abominable hast thou been in the sight of God and his angels ! For the foulest creature upon earth is a beauty, in comparison with a soul in sin. Ah ! couldst thou but see thyself as thou art, in this wretched state, the very sight would strike thee dead ! O detest then this abominable monster, and spare no pains to get rid of it.

Consider 2dly, the woes that are pronounced in Scripture against unrepenting sinners, and the judgments of God that are perpetually hanging over their heads, and threatening them on all sides both with temporal and eternal evils. Ah ! what good can they expect, who have made God their enemy, and are fighting against him ! He holds the thread of their life in his hands, which they are provoking him to break ; and if he breaks it, in that moment they drop into hell. They have made themselves slaves of the devil ; they are possessed by him, and are at his mercy, who knows not what mercy is. Death is always following them at the heels ; and a sudden, or, at least an unprovided death, is commonly the reward of their presumption. Hell below opens wide her jaws, and is gaping to swallow them up ; and thousands of them are daily going down into that bottomless pit, *where the worm never dies, and the fire is never extinguished*, St. Mark ix. 43. Ah ! who can bear everlasting fire ! Who can endure to burn for ever ! Fly then, my soul, from sin. Detest that evil, which can, and will, without repentance, condemn thee to hell.

Consider 3dly, that sin makes a dreadful separation between the soul and God ; which is begun

here, and extends to all eternity hereafter. *You are not my people*, says he, *Osee i. 9. and I will not be yours.* Alas ! the loss of God, which begins from mortal sin, is the very worst of all the ingredients of hell. Sin is a rebellion against this Sovereign Good ; a blasphemous preference of Satan before him : a sacrilegious attempt to rob him of his glory, and to divest him of his kingdom. It is murdering both the Son of God, and our own souls. The folly and madness of it, as well as the monstrous presumption and treason, is infinite. O how much then does that evil deserve to be detested, which robs us of an infinite good, which otherwise should have been ours for all eternity, and brings us nothing in exchange but endless and infinite evils ?

Conclude to labour, with all thy power, to drive away sin from thy soul by penance : and God will return to thee, and be thine for ever.

Other Motives of Contrition.

June 28. **C**ONSIDER first, the monstrous ingratitude that is found in sin. God is our first beginning, and our last end : he has given us our whole being, out of pure love, having no need at all of us ; he has made us, and made us for himself ; he has thought of us from all eternity ; he has loved us from all eternity ; and has prepared for us a happy eternity in the enjoyment of himself. In the mean time he is ever loading us with his benefits ; his eye is always upon us ; he preserves us from innumerable evils ; all his other works are appointed to serve us ; his very angels, by his orders, wait upon us ; his own Son came down from heaven to redeem us. O reflect, my soul, on the particular obligations thou hast to his divine goodness ! how he preserved thee in thy mother's womb, and brought thee safe to the waters of baptism, where he washed thee from sin, made thee his child, and heir to his kingdom : how he gave thee an early knowledge of

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himself, and of his heavenly truths; how he favoured thee with many graces, and opportunities of good, beyond thousands; how often he has admitted thee to his sacraments; how he has borne with thy repeated provocations and treasons for so many years; and, notwithstanding all thy unworthiness and ingratitude, has been still thy constant benefactor. Alas! how many are now howling and burning in hell, for the like sins to those thou hast so often committed; and how mercifully has he, all this while, dealt with thee! O detest then this sinful life thou hast hitherto led, and all thy past ingritudes; and, now at least, with thy whole heart, return to thy God.

Consider 2dly, my soul, what thy sins have cost thy dear Redeemer, the innocent Lamb of God. His whole life was a continual suffering; but what dreadful torments did he endure for thee, in his passion and death! Call over in thy mind the particulars of his sufferings, (which we have seen elsewhere) from his agony and bloody sweat, even to his expiring upon the cross; and learn, from that multitude and variety of torments, willingly endured for thy sins, how much he abhors sin, and how much he loves thee. For he had thee in his heart all this while; and for thee he was weeping, and praying, bleeding, and dying: to teach thee to return love for love, and to detest thy sins, which have crucified thy God. See then what motives thou hast for contrition, from the remembrance of the passion of thy Saviour!

Consider 3dly, the innumerable motives we have to love God, and consequently, to detest our sins, as infinitely opposite to his divine goodness. He is infinitely good in himself, infinitely beautiful and charming; the overflowing ocean of all goodness and beauty, ravishing all that are so happy as to see him, so that they can never cease to love him. His mercy, his bounty, his wisdom, his truth, is infinitely charming: all perfections are infinite in him.

No tongue can express, no heart can conceive, the incomprehensible greatness and multitude of his attractions. All created beauty and perfection quite disappears, and dwindles away to a pure nothing, when compared with him. He is infinitely good to us : the happiness of heaven consists in seeing, loving, and enjoying him. All our good is from him, and in him : he is our sovereign and universal good ; the being of our being, the life and light of our souls. He is our Maker, our Redeemer, our Father, our Friend, our Spouse, our God, and our All. To love him is our greatest honour, our greatest interest, our greatest pleasure ; it is the source of all our happiness, both here and hereafter. All these reasons oblige us to love God : all these motives strongly call upon us to detest, and to repent, for our sins, because, by them, we have offended so good a God.

Conclude, if thou wouldst secure to thy soul the remission of thy sins, to seek it by a repentance and contrition enlivened by love. Remember what our Lord said of that glorious penitent, St. Luke vii. 47. *Many sins are forgiven her, because she hath loved much.* Go thou, in like manner, to the feet of thy Saviour, with penitential tears, proceeding from love, and he will pronounce the like sentence in thy favour.

On SS. PETER and PAUL.

June 29. **C**ONSIDER first, the wonders of God in these two glorious saints : reflect what they were, before their being called by Jesus Christ ; how admirably they were afterwards exalted by divine grace, and how perfectly they corresponded with divine grace, by their zeal and by their labours ; by their lives and by their death. The Wisdom of God came down from heaven, to build a house, to found a city, to establish a kingdom, here upon earth, which should be ever victorious over

all the powers of hell; and should subsist, till time itself should end. And see what choice he has made of men to be his principal instruments in this great work. See, in the person of St. Peter, a poor, weak, illiterate fisherman, made the master-builder, under Christ, of this house and temple, and, at the same time, the strong rock and foundation of it: see him raised to be the first governor of this city; the prime minister of this kingdom of God upon earth, St. *Matt.* xvi. 18, 19, and St. *John* xxi. 15, &c. O! how true it is, that *God hath chosen the foolish things of the world, that he may confound the wise: and the weak things of the world, that he may confound the strong: and the things that are contemptible; and things that are not, that no flesh should glory in his sight,* 1 Cor. i. 27, &c. O divine wisdom, how incomprehensible are thy ways; and how much exalted above the ways of men! O how do these thy dealings with us confound the proud, and comfort the humble!

Consider 2dly, in the person of St. Paul, another still more admirable instance of the power of divine grace, and of the incomprehensible wisdom of the ways of God. An ignorant fisherman as St. Peter was, seems indeed, no ways qualified to be a preacher and teacher of Jews and Gentiles, a founder of churches, an Apostle, and prince of the Apostles: but then he was humble and simple; and such God usually chooses for the greatest things. But as for St. Paul, he was not only not qualified to be a preacher of the Gospel, but positively disqualified, by dispositions directly contrary to the humility and simplicity of the Gospel. He was a blasphemous Pharisee, a fiery zealot, a bloody persecutor, a ravenous wolf, scattering and destroying the sheep of Christ. And yet he is made, in a moment, by a miracle of grace, a vessel of election to carry the name of Christ before nations and kings, and the children of Israel: he is changed in an instant, from a wolf into a lamb: he puts off at once the Pharisee,

the blasphemer, the persecutor; he lays down his own will at the feet of Christ; and has now no other passion but that of employing his whole life in propagating the name, the will, and the kingdom of his God. O! here is a change of the right hand of the Most High! Here the wonders of God's power, wisdom and goodness, shine forth much more brightly, than even in the raising of the dead to life.

Consider 3dly, the lives of these two great saints after their call and election; their ardent zeal for the glory of their Lord; their unwearied labours in preaching and propagating his kingdom; their constancy in a long course of sufferings, dying, in a manner, daily, for the cause of God; and, above all things, that divine love and charity which continually burnt in their breasts; which animated all their words and actions; supported them in all their labours and sufferings; kept them always in their interior united to their God; and was daily growing stronger and stronger in them, till it made them victorious over death, and brought them to true life in the eternal enjoyment of the great object of their love.

Conclude to give praise and glory to God for all the graces and glory bestowed upon these two princes and pillars of his church. Study to learn the great lessons they taught, both by word and work. But especially learn of them the practice of divine love: nothing else can make us Saints.

On Sincerity in Confession.

June 30. **C**ONSIDER first, the necessity of being sincere in the confession of our sins, if we hope for the forgiveness of them. All hypocrisy, and double-dealing, in matters of this consequence, is abominable in the sight of God. The prophet pronounces a curse against them that *do the work of God deceitfully*, Jerem. xlviii. 10. And surely they must be guilty, in the highest degree, of doing the work of God deceitfully, that go to confession with

fraud and deceit; and, while they outwardly profess humility and sincerity, conceal, through the pride of their heart, and disguise, by lies, the guilt of their conscience. Ananias and Saphira were struck dead, by a visible judgment of God, for telling *a lie to the Holy Ghost*, Acts v. And are not all such as are insincere in the confession of their sins, guilty in like manner of telling a lie to the Holy Ghost, whilst they seek to impose upon the minister of God, in this most solemn and sacred function? They are guilty also of a grievous sacrilege, as often as they receive absolution in this case, by their profaning the sacrament of penance: which sacrilege is commonly followed by another still greater; by their making themselves also guilty of the body and blood of Christ, by an unworthy communion, and thereby receiving damnation to themselves. Good God preserve us from so heinous and so dreadful an evil!

Consider 2dly, the dismal consequences of suffering one's self to be imposed upon in such manner, by the father of lies, as to conceal any matter of moment in confession, either through shame, or fear, or pride of heart. Alas! to avoid a little present confusion, which would be immediately followed with the recovery of God's favour, with peace of conscience, comfort, and joy, what a bottomless pit of dreadful and endless evils does the soul cast herself headlong into! What inextricable difficulties, pains, and perplexities! For she has no sooner yielded herself up to the old serpent, by this criminal concealment, but this dumb devil takes such possession of her, as to make her apprehend the confession of her guilt, more than either death or hell. Hence she goes on adding sin to sin, sacrilege to sacrilege; butchered all the while by her own conscience; gnawed with a remorse which she seeks in vain to stifle; and carrying about with her a painful impostume in her heart, which never suffers her to be easy. She deludes herself indeed, with vain purposes of confessing some time or other hereafter; but, in the mean time, her diffi-

culties increase, the devil daily acquires more and more power over her, and the grace of God is removed still farther and farther from her; till, at length, mercy abused, gives place to justice, and when she least expects it, she is cut off in her sins; and carries down with her the guilt of them all, to be confessed, too late, in hell.

Consider 3dly, how little reason there is for a penitent to be so much ashamed of the confession of his sins. Sin, indeed, is shameful; but the confession of one's sins is not so. No: the humble confession of a sinner gives glory to God; is honourable to the penitent himself; and affords joy to the whole court of heaven. And, as to the confessor, besides that he is tied up by all laws to an eternal secrecy, and can make no manner of use of the knowledge he receives by confession, that can any ways be disagreeable to the penitent; he is so far, even in his own mind, from despising, or thinking worse, of the prodigal child, returning home by confession, or having less regard or affection for his penitent on that occasion; that, on the contrary, as he more clearly sees the hand of God, in the humility and sincerity of the confession, he rejoices in this happy change, he likes the penitent better than before, and conceives greater hopes of him for the future; and, thinking no more of what is past, he has a more tender regard than ever to a soul that has thus unboresomed herself to him. In the meantime, the penitent finds himself, in a manner, in Paradise, by the comfort and joy that he feels in having discharged his conscience of its load, and let out the impostume that would not suffer him to be easy.

Conclude to beware of the tricks of the father of lies, who hates nothing so much as an humble confession, and therefore makes use of innumerable artifices to induce Christians to pass over, or disguise, at least, their sins, in the sacrament of penance. Ah! how many thousands of souls has he deluded by these artifices, and drawn down into the

bottomless pit! Alas! how easy it is for persons to be deceived in these occasions, who, in effect, have a mind to be deceived; and are willing, at any rate, to form to themselves a false conscience, by some pretext or other, to spare themselves the shame of confessing their sins. See, my soul, this never be thy case: and therefore, whensoever thou findest a repugnance to confess any part of thy guilt, and a willingness to find some reason to dispense with thyself; be sure to confess the sooner that which thou findest this repugnance to declare, for fear of thy being imposed upon by pride or self-love.

End of the First Volume.





